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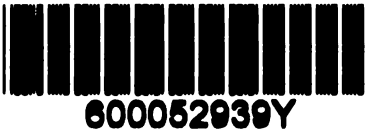
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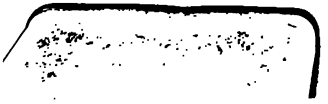

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LUCY IN THE CHESTNUT TREE.—P. 63.

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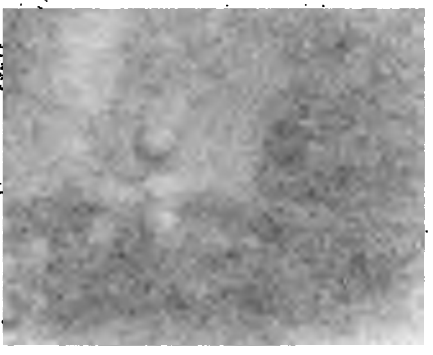

MARY MATHIESON:

OR

DUTIES AND DIFFICULTIES.

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MARY MATHIESON.

CHAPTER I.

Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;
Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.—LONGFELLOW.

WE generally like to know something of those persons who address us, and as I intend giving the following narrative in my own name and person, I shall endeavour, before beginning a history of my life, to introduce myself to my readers, not from any feeling of vanity I hope, but with a desire to interest them in the circumstances which I am about to relate, and which, as will be seen, are only the results of my own personal experience.

I am, then, a rather small, spare person, with a sallow complexion, and somewhere about that most indefinite period in woman's life, the middle age. My hair, which was once a chestnut brown, is now

almost white, having been silvered before the usual time, by the many cares, anxieties, and sorrows which have chequered a not inactive life; indeed, I was as gray as I am now when little more than thirty. I have, I believe, the most decided cut of an old maid, yet I am not, I hope, either ill-natured or morose, dispositions with which a charitable world generally invests a member of that unfortunate class, as among its necessary attributes.

My father was a Writer to the Signet in good business in Edinburgh. We had a large house in Charlotte Square, and lived there in comfort, and even luxury, till I was nearly eighteen; then a sad and sudden change came over our affairs, and we were made to drain the bitter cup of sorrow, it seemed to us, even to its very dregs. Up to this time I had been the gayest of the gay, and thoughtless as the thistle down, which the wind blows, it cares not whither; but I was now to have a weight of care laid on me, which my young shoulders could not have borne unassisted; but "He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," "who stayeth the east wind in the day of His rough wind," sustained and supported me, and even enabled me afterwards with heartfelt sincerity to say and feel, it was good for me to have been afflicted.

It was a dreary dismal day, towards the end of November, the sleet came driving against the windows in gusts, and the wind howled and whistled round the house. We were gathered round a large fire, that is to say, my three younger brothers, my darling little sister Emma, and myself; our mother lay in a bed which stood in the room, and but for an occasional deep drawn sigh, I should have hoped that she slept. None of us spoke, for a heavy chill was on our hearts—a dreary undefined oppressive sense of sorrow which we could not realise; for in the adjoining chamber lay our father, our beloved father, who, only a short week before, had been the very soul of our happy family party, but was now a lifeless corpse.

Our father was in the prime of life when thus so suddenly and unexpectedly taken from us. We never knew for a certainty the cause of his death, for the doctors were themselves doubtful about it; but it was certainly hastened by the news which he received three days before, of the failure of some joint-stock company, in which the money which he had inherited from his father, and his own hard earnings, had been invested. The shock produced by this news had aggravated a disorder, under which, though unconsciously, he had probably long

laboured; yet he seemed in his usual health when he joined us at dinner the day he heard of his loss, and spoke of it with manly fortitude, when my mother and I were alone with him, after the rest had gone to bed. I remember he said as he wished me good night, "My poor children! I have only insured my life for a thousand pounds, and if any thing should happen to me, what would become of your mother and you?" He kissed me twice affectionately, and in a tone I shall never forget, said "God bless you." They were the last words I ever heard him articulate distinctly. He was seized that night with a sort of fit. My mother never left him day or night, though he lay in a seeming stupor. On the third morning there was a dawn of returning consciousness: he took my mother's hand and whispered something, we could not catch the words; then he turned towards me a look which haunted me for months after; I thought it seemed to say, to you I intrust my fatherless children; and from that moment I became a new being.

And thus we sat round the fire on the evening of that mournful day, each of us silently wrapped in our own sad thoughts. Little Emma had seated herself on a footstool at my knee, and leaning her head against me had cried herself asleep. I do not

know how long we had sat in this way, but it must have been a long time, for the light still struggled through the drawn blind when we had first closed round the fire, after a vain attempt to swallow some dinner, and before I awoke from my reverie it was quite dark, and the room was only lighted by the flickering gleams of the fire. Whatever the length of time might be as measured by the clock, I had lived a lifetime in it. I had reviewed my past existence; how vain and trifling it seemed! I had tried to penetrate the future, but it lay a dull and dreary blank before me; and then I had recalled my father's dying look, and communed with myself how I should fulfil the charge, which I imagined he wished to leave with me. A thousand plans suggested themselves to my mind, but none seemed possible when more closely investigated. I would keep a school, but how could I, so young and inexperienced, attempt such an undertaking, which would require at any rate capital to begin it. We would keep boarders, but my mother's health was so delicate, she would be quite unable for such a burden, and I was too young. In vain I tried to plan some means by which I might really assist my family, and myself remain a member of the domestic circle; and at last, unconscious that I was speaking

aloud, I clasped my hands, and said almost with agony, "It must be done." "Dear Mary," said my brother George, "you have awoke our mother."

It was indeed true. Worn out with watching, my mother had gradually fallen asleep, and now started with a look of alarm, and said, "What must be done?"

Deeply grieved for my want of caution, I went to the bed-side, and kissed her cold pale cheek.

"What were you thinking of, my child?" said my mother, looking at me earnestly.

"I was only thinking, my dearest mother, that I must leave you all," I said, sobbing till it seemed as if my heart would break; they were the scalding tears of a first and bitter grief.

My mother remained silent for a time, and seemed unable to speak, but after some minutes spent apparently in mental devotion—for her hands were clasped, and her eyes raised—she whispered, yet so distinctly that we could all hear her words, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art

mine." As she said these words, tears, the first that she had shed since my father's death, chased each other slowly down her cheek, which glowed with a transient colour, as she repeated in a louder and firmer tone, the words, "Fear not, thou art mine."

Another long silence ensued, which was again broken by my mother. "Dear Mary," she said, "let us for at least a few days strive rather to learn the lesson which our Heavenly Father is intending to teach us, by this bitter dispensation. Let us 'commune with our own hearts, and be still,' and try trustfully to leave the future in the hands of Him who hath promised to be a Father to the fatherless." The last word she spoke with such a broken voice, we rather guessed than heard it, and then throwing her arms round little Emma, who had not awoke with my sudden exclamation, and whom I had laid beside our mother, she wept long and bitterly.

How heavily the time creeps on when there is death in the house. Each hour seems a day, each day a lifetime. How gently we tread, as if afraid of disturbing that deep repose which knows no waking. How loathingly we turn from the regularly served meals, of which one

loved member of our social board shall never more partake.

At last the hearse which was to take from us all that remained of one so dearly loved, came to the door. My mother had been in bed ever since my father's death till that day, when she had risen to take a last look of the dear face she would never more see on earth; and we had found her lying on the floor beside the coffin in a deep swoon. The anxious watching during his illness, and the shock of his unexpected death, had been too much for her delicate health; and for many days death hovered round her couch, and seemed to claim her for his victim. She had been so deeply attached to my father that, I think, she rather hailed with pleasure the probability of meeting him so soon in a land where parting and sorrow are unknown; but then, the thought of our helplessness and of our inexperience gave a pang to her heart, and seemed at times almost to overpower her, when she reflected she might so soon leave us. How earnestly she prayed for us, and with us, that strength might be given us according to our day; how sweet were the lessons she strove to inculcate, especially on me, as the eldest, of the need of a constant and trustful dependence

on a higher strength than our own, I shall never forget. Almost every word she then uttered seems engraven on the tablets of my heart, and has often returned to my mind in seasons of doubt and distress, and proved a very balm of Gilead to my wounded spirit. At the time, I treasured them up as her dying legacy, but they were not destined to prove so. He who does not try us beyond what we are able to bear, had compassion on our misery, and restored to us our still remaining parent, not indeed to health, but to such a measure of it, as enabled her to take the guidance of the education and training of those amongst us, who were still to remain under her fostering care.

As soon as my mother's returning health enabled me to leave my post by her bed-side, I again revolved in my mind the means by which I might best fulfil what I always considered as my father's dying request. Kind friends assisted me in making the necessary arrangements for reducing our establishment, letting our house, and looking out for a small one suited to our reduced circumstances. Some even made offers to take one member or another of our family, and bring them up as their own children; but we had no near

relations, and I could not bear the thoughts of being indebted to strangers for what I thought we might procure by our own exertions and self-denial. My mother was quite incapable of active exertion, so I was obliged to do all that was necessary myself, and to trouble her as little as possible; but she helped me with her advice, and in her calm and truly Christian submission to the afflicting dispensations which she was called to bear, set me an example of humble faith and patience which, I trust, was not entirely lost on me.

I have already mentioned that I had three brothers and a sister. My eldest brother, George, was a fine manly fellow, within a few days of fifteen, when my father died. It had been intended that he should follow my father's profession of the law, but he had not yet begun to study for it, and was just then attending classes at the University for Latin, chemistry, natural history, &c. My second brother, William, was thirteen, a good boy, but rather dull at learning, and, indeed, I believe, we should have thought him stupid, but that his good humour prevented us from judging harshly of him. Tom was a sprightly very pretty boy of nine, and Emma, *my* Emma, as I used to call her, was only five.

It was a sad day to all of us excepting Emma, the day we left our dear old house in Charlotte Square, and took up our abode in a small flat in Cumberland Street. I had done all I could to make my mother's room look as like the old one as possible, but it would not do; the furniture looked so overgrown in the small bed-room, that I was obliged to dismiss many things which I had fancied indispensable to her comfort. For our new sitting room, I chose the plainest articles of furniture which I could select from what had formerly been our parlour and library; but with a little taste in the arrangement (and George and I exerted all the ability that we possessed), we made the room look wonderfully well. Anxieties and labours to which I had hitherto been such an entire stranger did not fail to do their work on my constitution, and my pale cheek and hollow eye soon attracted the attention of my poor mother, and drew forth from her many a sigh; but I strove to the utmost to seem cheerful in her presence, and not to let her see how very tired I often was.

At last, with the help of my brothers, we got our new abode ready, and the person who had taken our house in Charlotte Square, being anxious to enter it as soon as possible, we fixed on a day

in the middle of January to make the move. We all dreaded the effect of it on our dear mother, to whom we felt it would be another wrenching of old ties and affections; but when the day came, she was the most composed of us all; hers was a faith of that simple and earnest kind, that it really seemed in its exercise to remove mountains of difficulties, and where it was only a matter of personal inconvenience or discomfort, she could submit not only patiently but cheerfully. A friend had kindly promised to send her carriage to convey my mother to our new dwelling. She was sitting ready to go half an hour before the time fixed for us to leave. She was deadly pale, but composed. She gave me several directions about sundry small packets which we were to take with us, and even tried to answer with a smile the innumerable questions poured forth by little Emma about our new house.

At last the carriage drove to the door, and my mother rose to go to it. She had never left her room since the day of my father's funeral. As she passed the entrance to what had been *their* room, she paused, her lip quivered, and she touched the handle of the door; then turning quickly away, and clinging to my arm almost con-

vulsively, she muttered, "It is better not;" and went down stairs. I believe if she had been overcome, I should have maintained my composure; as it was, the look of calm and patient sorrow with which she stepped into the carriage, her dim eye and bloodless cheek, seemed to tell such a tale of suffering endured in silence, that I could not bear to look on her; and throwing myself back in the carriage, and putting my hands before my face, I gave vent to my sorrow in passionate tears, mingled with exclamations at our hard and bitter lot. My mother, who knew that words could do little to stem the torrent of feelings long pent up, did not at first try to check my tears, but when she saw that my undisciplined heart was ready to rebel against the hand that had laid us low, she took me gently round the waist, and, drawing me nearer to her, said, "Mary, I am sure you would not willingly add to the weight of sorrow which just now bears me down, yet every word which you utter, as if in repining against the will of our Father in heaven, pierces my heart with a new and bitter pang. Oh, my child, let us rather strive to feel gratitude for the mercies He has vouchsafed to us in past times, and to trust Him for the future, for He has promised that He will never leave nor for-

sake us." Her gentle soothing manner quieted the turbulence of my grief, but I could not see how such bitter sorrow could result in pleasant fruits. I could trust in the kindness and goodness of an earthly parent, but had yet to learn the same child-like submission and confidence in a heavenly.

Poor little Emma was quite at a loss to understand what could occasion such a burst of grief. She climbed up on my knee, wiped my tears with her handkerchief, and strove by a hundred little arts to cheer and comfort me. "Don't cry, sister Mary," she said; "we are going to a new house, and I shall sleep beside mamma and you, in a crib, and that will be much nicer than sleeping in the nursery, and I will get up the minute you call me; and I will be very good, indeed I will try to be so very good, only don't cry, sister Mary."

I was beginning to feel a little more composed, and, pressing my darling to my heart, I said, "Yes, my sweet one, you must try to be very good, to take care of mamma, and be her little housekeeper, instead of sister Mary: poor sister Mary is going away, going to leave mamma and her own little Emma;" and again my tears burst forth in fresh bitterness, and this time little Emma joined me, putting her little arms round my neck, and sob-

bing, while she always repeated, "You must not go, sister Mary; stay with Emma."

My mother looked at me in some surprise, then said, "You have not made any positive arrangements for leaving, Mary?" "Oh no, dearest mother, but I have formed a plan, and done something towards putting it into execution. I would not trouble you with it, ill and harassed as you have been, till things were in some measure arranged. I have received a letter to-day, however, which I intended to consult you about this evening; but I have behaved very ill, very selfishly, in giving way to my grief, as I have done. Forgive me, dear mother, I will strive for the future to bring my feelings more under control."

By this time we had arrived at the door of our new abode. A number of little dirty children gathered round the carriage door; for the sight of an equipage, such as we were in, was a rare one in the street. Little Emma, who had forgotten her late tears, was all bustle and importance, handing out the packages, and seeing that her doll, with its box of clothes, was duly attended to. The boys, who had walked down before we left our old house, were standing ready to receive us, and George handed our mother out, and assisted her to mount

the long stair, with the air of one who was taking upon himself an important charge.

From the moment of our father's death, George, like myself, seemed to have become another creature; he had been a lively, thoughtless, often troublesome boy; now he had become a thoughtful steady man. In all that I had done, I had taken him into my councils, and he had astonished me with his forethought and tact. His eagerness to save our mother from unnecessary care and anxiety, and the delicacy and womanlike thoughtfulness of his attentions to her, were really touching.

As soon as the door had closed upon us, and we were fairly installed in our house, our first care was to place our dear mother in a comfortable armchair at the fire-side, while we busied ourselves in putting those things to rights, which had not been brought down till that day. We were every moment interrupted by little Emma, whose delight at the change knew no bounds. "Oh, Mary, here is such a nice little closet. May I keep my doll's things here? Look, George, what a neat little room; this is to be for Tom and William, and you are to have the funny little room, like a closet, that opens out of mamma's room. What fun it will be living in such a little tiny house. And you

won't leave us, sister Mary, will you? because I should not like even this nice little house if you were to go away; and besides, you know, Mary, if you go away, there will be no one to dress me, now that nurse is gone, and we have only one maid."

I took the little prattler on my knee. "Emma, my darling," I said, "you must try to make yourself very useful, to help yourself to dress and undress, and to give as little trouble as possible; and then if I am obliged to leave you, as I very likely shall, I shall not be so unhappy as I should be if I thought our dear sick mother would have much trouble with you."

She opened her large blue eyes and looked at me with a serious wonder, which sometimes gives such an expression of deep thought to the faces of very young children. "Sister Mary," she said at last, "you are not going to die like poor dear papa?" "Not just yet, I hope, my darling, but I may be obliged to leave you for a long time." She looked very thoughtful for a few minutes, then laying her little head on my shoulder, and putting her arm round my neck, she said, "Sister Mary, mamma says God has promised to take care of us, if we trust in Him; why do you look so sad, and why did you cry so in the coach, when God

has promised to take care of us?" Truly out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God has ordained praise. The childlike words of my little sister, spoken in such simple faith, found an entrance to my heart, which hitherto seemed obstinately to have refused to be comforted. "You are right, my sweet one," I said, kissing her soft cheek, "and I will strive to trust in Him, and to be more cheerful."

That evening, George, my mother, and myself, sat up late, discussing my plans for the future. These I had already communicated to George on the night of our father's funeral. I now told my mother what I had done. Two years before, I had been sent to an excellent school near London, where I remained for eighteen months, and had formed a very close intimacy with a girl of good family and fortune. She was two years my senior, and very steady, but though our dispositions were very different, she had become extremely fond of me, and I warmly returned her affection, while the difference of our age, and her greater steadiness, had always made me look up to her with respect. To her, then, I had written on the evening of my father's funeral, telling her of our sad bereavement and of the distressing change in our

circumstances. I mentioned my desire of assisting my family to the utmost of my ability, and told her that I thought the only means I had of doing so was by engaging myself as a governess. "I knew," I said, "how disqualified I was for such a task, from my youth and inexperience; but I was not destitute of accomplishments, and should at any rate bring to my duties an earnest will and a conscientious desire to perform them aright."

The letter I had received that morning ran as follows:—"Your letter, my dearest Mary, would have been sooner answered, had I not desired, along with the expression of my deep and heartfelt sympathy with your sad bereavement, to tell you that I had been able to accomplish something towards the furtherance of your views. You have chosen a thorny path, my dear friend, but I believe you could scarcely have followed any other under the circumstances. May you seek and find strength for the performance of the laborious and responsible duties to which you will be called. Immediately on receiving your letter, I communicated its contents to my mother, who experienced with me deep sorrow on your account and that of your family. She has heard so much of you from me, and I had heard so much of your dear father and

mother, and of the other members of your family, from yourself, that we felt as if we had lost some near and dear friend in your father, and that your other trials were also our own. . . . But I have said more than enough; you know, I am sure, already that I have felt for and with you. Just about the time I received your letter, mamma met, at a party in London, with an old friend whom she had not seen for many years. This lady asked my mother if she knew of any governess she could recommend for her only girl—a spoilt child, I hear, of about twelve. My mother mentioned you and the circumstances which had led to your wishing to engage yourself as a governess. At first Lady Taylor made some objection to your want of experience, but a few days since, mamma got a note from her, saying, that on reconsidering the matter, both Sir William and she had thought that perhaps a young person, to whom she might get attached, would be more suitable for their girl than an older person, whom she might regard more in the light of an enemy, if she attempted to check her in her wild vagaries. You will need much patience, my dear Mary, and much wisdom in dealing with one who has hitherto been so unaccustomed to control. Still it affords

you an opportunity of usefulness, and this in itself is something honourable and encouraging; and the thought that you are contributing to the support and comfort of those near and dear to you, will often cheer you when you might otherwise be cast down. If you decide on accepting of this situation, you must write immediately to Lady Taylor. Her address is Hanfield Park, Somersetshire. The arrangement mamma made for you was, that your salary should be £60 a year, and your travelling expenses, etc. etc., paid." . . .

Her letter was filled with many expressions of kindness to myself and sympathy with us all, which it were needless to give here. After I had read it aloud, we were silent for a while, and then my mother said, "We have no choice, my dear Mary; the situation so opportunely offered, and the salary so much higher than one so young was entitled to expect, I look upon as a providential interposition which we are not entitled to reject."

She then gave me much affectionate advice, and we afterwards discussed at full length the means which would be at our disposal for the support of the family. The £1000 which my father had insured on his life had been placed in a safe investment, and yielded £40 per annum. There was a

small annuity to my mother of £35 from some widows' fund, and the sale of our superfluous plate and furniture had produced £500. It seemed a miserable pittance to my poor mother, but she spoke cheerfully of the great addition which my salary would make to the common stock, and evidently did all she could to encourage me, though I could see how deeply she felt the thought of being obliged to send me out into the world among strangers—one who had been so tenderly nurtured, and so carefully sheltered from every hardship.

I that evening wrote to Lady Taylor with a trembling hand, telling her that I had heard through Mrs Trenchard of her willingness to take me into her family, and that I on my side was willing and anxious to do all in my power to serve and please her. Her answer came a few days after by return of post. It was as follows:—"Lady Taylor presents her compliments to Miss Mathieson, and is glad to find that she has resolved on taking the situation of governess now vacant in her family. Miss Mathieson will have the charge of one little girl, whose education having been somewhat neglected owing to bad health, will require perhaps more than usually strict discipline and training. Lady Taylor thinks it as well to mention that Miss

Mathieson will not be expected to appear in the drawing-room in the evenings unless specially invited to do so. Lady Taylor requests that Miss Mathieson will endeavour to arrange to come to her as soon as possible, as she wishes to lose no time in placing her daughter under regular control."

Considering that she knew from Mrs Trenchard all the circumstances which had led to my leaving home, we thought Lady Taylor's note cold and unfeeling. However, we had no longer any choice, and so I obtained my first situation as a governess.

CHAPTER II.

And the home of my childhood is distant far,
And I walk in a land where strangers are;
And the looks that I meet, and the sounds that I hear,
Are not light to my spirit, nor song to my ear.—HERVEY.

SHAKESPERE talks of parting as a "sweet sorrow." I cannot say that I ever experienced its sweetness, and, on the present occasion, both in prospect, and when the sad moment actually came, it was bitter enough. As there was nothing to hinder my leaving immediately, and Lady Taylor was anxious that I should enter into my new duties as soon as possible, an early day was fixed for my departure.

This was perhaps a happy thing for me, as the necessary preparations I had to make, left me little time for brooding over our late misfortunes, or for gloomy anticipations as to the future.

The sad day of parting came at last. My mother had given me much loving and useful

counsel the night before; and as we had all determined to struggle against our feelings, and to maintain our composure, if possible, we met at breakfast time almost as on other days, except that our faces wore an unusual expression of gravity.

I was very nearly overcome, however, when, on placing myself as usual, at the head of the breakfast table, I found there three packets addressed to myself, with the following inscriptions:— "With a mother's blessings and prayers;" "Remember George;" and "Mary Mathieson from her affectionate brother William."

I opened my parcels and found a beautiful Bible from my mother, a handsome desk from George, and a very pretty album from William. The two latter had made their purchases out of the money which they had been able to lay by, from the pocket allowance which they used to receive weekly in more prosperous days. As to Tom, he never had been known to keep a sixpence in his pocket for more than an hour, and of course he had nothing laid by for such an occasion as the present. He looked very rueful as I thanked the rest, and made many apologies for not having any thing to give, accompanied with vain regrets

that he had spent his money so foolishly. Little Emma looked thoughtful and sad also for a moment, then a bright thought seemed to strike her, for her eye sparkled, her cheek flushed, and she left the room. Emma was not long in re-appearing, carrying her doll in her arms, with a look of triumph, and putting it almost into my plate, she exclaimed—" Sister Mary, I will give you my doll," adding, in a tone full of pathos—" Please to take care of it." The poor doll had lost one eye, had long been wigless, and had its nose flattened and blackened out of all semblance of the human face divine; yet it was a rich gift; it was the greatest earthly treasure possessed by the giver, and it was given out of the fulness of a warm and loving heart. Carefully suppressing an inclination to smile at the gift, I explained to little Emma, that the doll might be in my way in travelling, and while accepting her present with many thanks, I begged her to take care of it for me. She was amply rewarded for her self-denial by the delight which this arrangement gave her, and henceforward the doll possessed a double charm, as, independent of its own intrinsic merits, it became a sort of sacred duty to take charge of it for me.

There were no railways in those days between Edinburgh and London, for I am writing of twenty years ago, so I was to sail by the steamer from Leith at three o'clock. It had been arranged that none but George should accompany me to the vessel—my mother being unable to do so, and it being advisable that I should be as little excited as possible after getting on board.

I shall pass over the parting scene; it may readily be supposed how sad it was; and when George, too, had left me, and I felt myself alone in the world, then indeed my heart felt cheerless and desolate. But there was a change in that cold hard heart since my father's death. Then, it would have risen in rebellious repining against the hand that was chastening it, but "tribulation had worked patience, and patience experience, and experience hope."

The simple words of my little sister, when exhorting me to believe that God would take care of us, had been instrumental in breaking down the hindrances which want of faith had raised in my path; and now, amid my desolation, I could look upwards and feel that there was One watching over me in my forlorn condition, and sympathising with my sorrow. I had remained on deck till I

could no longer see George on the pier; then, going down to the cabin, I sat on one of my boxes, and was soon lost in a sad reverie. I was roused to consciousness by the loud yelping of a dog, and a sharp voice at my ear exclaiming, in no very amiable tone, "Dogs are not allowed in the cabin; stewardess, put that brute out." The order was, however, unnecessary, as the lady who gave it had already kicked the poor animal out. A stoutish lady, who sat at the farther end of the cabin, immediately called it back again, saying, in a very indignant voice, "ma'am, the dog is mine, and no one has any right to treat it in that manner. Come here, little Fanny, my poor sweet little Fan. Did they kick you, my beauty? but they shan't touch it—no, they shan't." All this time the dog, a little fat poodle that could scarcely waddle, was sitting on its mistress' lap, whining and shaking as if it had been dreadfully hurt.

Meanwhile the lady who had been the aggressor, feeling that the words of comfort addressed to the dog were equally intended as words of defiance to her, bridled up, and in the same sharp tones with which she had first startled me, adopted her antagonist's mode of assault, and, instead of answering her directly, spoke to the stewardess. "It is really

insufferable, stewardess, that a nasty dog should be allowed to come into the ladies' cabin, and I will not allow it."—"Deed, ma'am," said the stewardess, rather disconcerted, as she evidently favoured the other lady, "I dinna see ony harm the puir brute does; and if the passengers dinna object"—

"But I do object," said the lady.—"O ay, but there are more than you—there's this young lady hasna said a word agin the dog. Please, Miss, have you ony objections to the poor harmless creature just coming in whiles to see its mistress?" She had sidled up to me by this time, and whispered—"Please, Miss, dinna be sending the dog out; ye see it belangs to Lady Helen, and I wadna like to displeasure her leddyship." This she contrived to say while the attention of the lady was engaged by the *sotto voce* remarks of Lady Helen, still addressed to her dog. "Did they call my Fan a nasty brute; never mind, my sweet one, we could return the compliment if we wished—could not we, my pretty?"—

"Stewardess," said the enraged lady, "I insist on your putting that abominable dog out of the cabin. I am not here to be tormented by dogs, or insulted by anybody."

"Please, ma'am," replied the stewardess, "this

young lady says she disna mind the dog; and I am sure for my part, I think its just a pleasure to have the bit canny beast aside one, and her leddyship disna like it to be sent into the steerage, so that's three against one. 'Tisna like in summer, when there's such a heap of passengers, one wadna hae time to attend to it, puir thing, and it might be in the way."

I do not know whether the majority against her would have decided the lady to resign her pretensions; but the necessity she was under at that moment of claiming the stewardess' assistance, in getting basins and helping her into bed, at least had the effect of silencing her; and lady Helen, with a triumphant look, remained mistress of the field. As I had not opposed the admission of the dog, though I had certainly not encouraged it either, she took a fancy to me, and came and sat beside my berth, to which I also had retired, being dreadfully sick. I had always in my simplicity imagined that every member of our aristocracy—the female portion of it at least—must be fascinating in manners, and cultivated in mind. I was wofully disappointed in the specimen now introduced to my notice. Lady Helen was coarse in appearance and manners, and vulgar in mind.

She questioned me very closely as to where I was going, how long I was to be away, for whom I was in mourning, and what was my name. I was very sick and sad, and it may well be imagined, that her impertinent curiosity was a great annoyance to me. I answered her, however, civilly. With constant sea sickness, and such a companion always at my side during the day, it is not astonishing that I hailed with delight the news that we had passed the Nore, and were sailing on the broad smooth bosom of the Thames.

Before my father's death, my mind had been like the album which William gave me the day I left home. The first few years of my life were like the first page of my album, which contained my name written in wreaths of flowers. One leaf of life's album had been turned over and sullied with tears; a second had been opened, and it seemed to convey a caricature of life :—the vulgar great lady, the obsequious cringing stewardess, the ill-natured old woman, whose enmity was not confined to the dog, but seemed equally directed against her own species. My first experiences in the " Wide, wide world," were unpromising enough; but I strove to bear up against the sad forebodings which filled my mind, as I sat on deck

and watched the innumerable vessels, which passed up and down the busy Thames. At last we came in sight of the crowded wharf, and eagerly did I look to see if I could find out some one there waiting for me; for my friend Julia Trenchard had promised to send some one to meet me, as she had been unwell, and did not think she could come herself. I looked for some time among the faces crowding the edge of the wharf, and was speculating on the probability of any person being there for me, the vessel having arrived somewhat earlier than usual, when I noticed a handsome carriage drive up, and to my great joy saw the beaming face of my kind friend looking out of the window. She soon caught sight of me, and as we greeted each other with an affectionate smile and nod, I heard the voice of my tormentor at my side. "Upon my word, a very handsome turn out; some rich Cit I suppose! What's your friend's name, my dear?" I mentioned the name of Trenchard. "Ah, very *comme il faut* people; I have met them in society. What do you know about them, child?" I answered, I fear in rather a pettish voice, that I had been at school with Mr Trenchard's only daughter; upon which she patted my chin, and laughed, saying, "Well, well, child,

I meant no offence." I wished her a hasty good morning, as the footman had now come on board to get my luggage, and was soon in the carriage with dear Julia, and held in her close and affectionate embrace.

"I felt so much better," she said, "that I could not deny myself the pleasure of coming to meet you; and mamma thought I had better come alone, as she had no doubt we should have a great deal to say to each other." How soothing and delightful her gentle words and kindly sympathies were to me, I will not attempt to express. We had much earnest and pleasant talk, on the drive to her home, where it had been before arranged that I should stay for two days, to recruit my strength and spirits, before proceeding to my final destination.

Mr Trenchard's house was situated about four miles out of London, on the Norwood side. A very pretty substantial building it was, furnished with simplicity, yet with elegance, and surrounded by a considerable space of ground, tastefully laid out, and carefully kept. The appearance of the mistress of the house, who was walking up and down in front of it when we arrived, was in keeping with the place. There was a simpli-

city and dignity in her appearance and movements which inspired respect at the first glance, and that feeling was soon changed into love, as her gentle manners and cultivated mind became better appreciated.

She had two qualities, which are peculiarly attractive in woman, gracefulness of action, and a remarkably sweet voice. She came forward to meet me as I alighted from the carriage, and kissed me affectionately; while there was something in her very tone of addressing me, which, without words, would have convinced me of her warm sympathy with my late trials and present situation.

When I had before occasionally visited at her house, I had stood somewhat in awe of Mrs Trenchard, for I was then a thoughtless giddy girl, and less able to appreciate her very superior character; now I felt almost at a glance that I could love her as a second mother. After resting for a short time in my own room, and making my toilet rather more satisfactorily than I had been able to do on board ship, I repaired to the drawing-room, where I found Mr Trenchard, who had come home after my arrival, and was sitting there with his wife and daughter.

He met me also most kindly; but he was wanting in the exquisite tact, which distinguished his wife in all she said and did.

The next day Mrs Trenchard accompanied Julia and myself in to London, and each of them gave me handsome and useful presents. We were on the point of returning home, when Mrs Trenchard said: "Oh, I had almost forgotten one purchase which I had intended making;" and, ordering the coachman to stop at a stationer's shop, she alighted, and soon returned carrying in her hand a good sized octavo volume, with a clasp and lock. "I have got you this, my dear," she said, placing it in my hands, "and request that for my sake you will endeavour to keep a regular journal; you will find it eventually of great use to yourself. It will serve to register feelings and ideas, which in after years you will look back upon with interest, besides accustoming you to a habit of self investigation which is most useful to all, but more especially to one who is to take the charge of educating young persons."

I thanked her cordially, and may here mention, that to the habit I then formed of keeping a regular journal, I am indebted for the greater part of my present imperfect sketches. A second night I slept

under that kind and hospitable roof, but I did not consign myself to rest, till I had written in my journal as minute an account as I could recall of all that had taken place since my leaving home. The following day I again went to London, accompanied by my two kind friends, who saw me safe into the coach which was to convey me to Taunton, from whence I was to procure a chaise to take me to Hanfield Park, my future home. There was no Great Western Railway in those days, with its express train to convey passengers in four hours from London to Taunton.

A weary day and night did I pass in the close confined coach, before we came in view of the exquisite tower of St. Mary's Church, relieved like lace-work against the clear cold sky of a January afternoon. The monotony and sadness of my journey had however been greatly diminished by the companionship of an elderly gentleman, the only inside passenger except myself. My deep mourning, and the sad expression of my young face, were instant recommendations to his kindness and sympathy. He soon drew from me the short story of my sorrows, and cheered and advised me as if I had been his daughter. His kindness was truly like the cup of cold water given in the

Saviour's name to one of His little ones. May he receive his reward!

I took some refreshment at the Castle Inn at Taunton, and then got into the chaise which was to take me to Hanfield; and now all that I had undertaken rose before me in such a formidable light, that I would willingly have retraced my footsteps, and given up my situation.

Even if I were really capable of fulfilling my duties satisfactorily, how was I to encounter the family on my first arrival; the very thought was overpowering. I pictured to myself the proud and stately lady, and her not less proud husband—the unruly daughter, and the eldest son, who, I had heard, was at home, and just fresh from College. All, I thought, would look with pride and contempt on the poor, unprotected governess. But the more I feared this first introduction, the sooner I was to realise it, as the postilion, lashing his whip, drove me nearer and nearer to what I so much dreaded. The night was cold and frosty, but it was not the external cold which gave to my hands, and indeed to my whole person, the damp chill which was more like that of a corpse than anything else. I almost lost consciousness, as the carriage stopped, that the porter might open

the park-gates. I was shortly after roused by the carriage again stopping in front of what seemed a large mansion, from a great many windows of which lights were shining. I endeavoured to summon up all my courage to the formidable encounter. A man-servant handed me out, and helped the post-boy to carry in my boxes, while I stood in the spacious hall, looking on with a sort of stupid indifference, till I accidentally overheard the following conversation, which took place in the drawing-room, the door of which opened into the hall, and was partially open. In justice to the speakers, I must say that I am convinced now, that they had not the least idea that the door was open; but remembering Lady Helen, I fancied that the words they uttered were intended to meet my ear. "It's that horrid old witch of a governess," was the first exclamation I heard, and from the voice, I readily guessed it was uttered by my future pupil. "What a bore!" seemed to proceed from a young man; "all governesses are bores." "They are at least necessary evils," replied a lady, "so we must submit with patience." I felt all my colour mantling in my cheek, and could almost have ordered my boxes back into the coach, so angry did I feel for a moment; but then the

thoughts of my dependent situation, of the dear ones who looked to me for assistance and support, came across me, and I said to myself, What have I to do with pride?

Just then the footman asked by what name he should announce me, and loudly calling out, "Miss Mathieson!" ushered me, trembling and half fainting, into the drawing-room.

There are moments in our life when we are almost unconscious at the time of what is taking place around us, and when scenes which, while actually before our eyes, we can scarcely be said to have witnessed, come back upon us, after all has passed from our actual vision, with startling reality. My first introduction to the family of Sir William Taylor was one of these. At the distance of more than twenty years, the whole rises before me with the minute distinctness of a pre-Raphaelite picture. I see the proud, tall, and stately form of the lady, rising to receive her trembling guest, and offering, coldly and almost passively, three of her white and jewelled fingers, while I hear her haughty voice saying, I am happy to see you, Miss Mathieson; allow me to introduce to you your future pupil. I see the slender form of Lucy Taylor in constant, but not ungraceful

motion, and hear her reluctant and almost inaudible greeting, when told by her mother to speak to Miss Mathieson. I see the good humoured old baronet, and hear his cordial voice giving me welcome to Hanfield; and I see the manly figure of the son, who, whatever may be his opinion as to governesses being bores, is now, with real politeness, and a degree of sympathy in his manner, begging me to be seated, and hoping that I am not dreadfully tired with my long journey. All this is now before me with a life-like reality; yet when I stood there, on that, to me, memorable evening, I seemed neither to see nor to hear anything. All appeared to float before me like some disturbing vision—my late fatiguing journey, and the sudden blaze of light into which I was brought, contributing, no doubt, to the confusion of my senses.

I soon, however, recovered my self-possession, and after answering a few questions about my journey, etc., pleading, with much truth, fatigue and a bad headache, begged permission to retire to my own room. A servant conducted me to the door of my apartment, where I found a large and cheerful fire, and everything looking pleasant and comfortable. He asked if I would

take any refreshment, which I declined, and closing my door, I gave way to my pent up feelings in a paroxysm of tears. After a while, I felt relieved by this burst of grief, and leaning my head on my hand, I set myself to consider my situation, and to try to reconcile myself to my lot; and though tears still forced themselves through my fingers, they were much less bitter than at first. Hope seldom forsakes the young, and she soon began to whisper pleasant suggestions into my ear. I should set myself with such an earnestness of goodwill to the task I had undertaken, that I could not, I thought, fail of success. Then I anticipated the gradual unbending of the haughty mother, as she saw the improvement of her hitherto untamed child, and the more readily expressed gratitude of the kind-hearted father. I was gathering in the harvest before the seed was sown, forgetting all the toil and patience, the digging and planting, the storm and sunshine, without which, in the moral as in the physical world, there can be no fruition.

CHAPTER III.

EDUCATION.

"The governess, the governess, now lonely in her room,
The wounded nerve is throbbing, the brow is dark with gloom;
Not a kindly word was spoken, not a glance in heart to bide;
Ev'n the mothers and the sisters passed on the other side."

JOHN FOSTER has beautifully and truly remarked, "Everything is education:—the trains of thought in which you are indulging at this hour; the society in which you will pass this evening; the conversations, walks, and incidents of to-morrow. And so it ought to be; we may thank the world for its infinite means of impression and excitement which keep our faculties awake and in action, while it is our important office to preside over that action, and lead it to a divine result."

I was beginning to feel the force of this sort of education, and was about to endeavour to lead another to feel it also; for, after all, we can but

give the bias. Every individual who wishes for the "divine result" must exercise a degree of self-discipline, and be willing to learn the lesson which every event of our life, whether great or trivial, is calculated to teach.

I was sitting, as mentioned in the close of the last chapter, listening with the eagerness of youth to the flattering tale of hope, when a gentle tap at my door arrested my attention, and on saying "come in," a tall, pleasant-looking, middle-aged female entered, carrying a tray with refreshments.

I had already begun to repent the rashness with which I had refused the offer of something to eat on my first arrival, as the excitement once over, I had been painfully reminded of how small a quantity of food I had been able hastily to swallow at our various stopping-places on my journey. Too shy, however, to think of ringing the bell and requesting food, I had made up my mind to go supperless to bed, when the present welcome apparition greeted my eyes.

My pleasure was increased tenfold, when this kind minister to my wants addressed me in a decidedly Scotch accent—"John said that you were not wanting onything to eat, Miss, but I thought you could na but be hungry after such a

long journey, so I brought this up, and I hope you will try and tak' something; it's not good to be going to bed fasting."

"Indeed, I was just thinking," I answered, "how foolish I had been to refuse it, and how much I should like a cup of tea, so that I assure you, your kindness is most welcome; and the more so, that I think I am indebted to a country-woman for it."

"Ou ay, I was from the Crosscauseway, in Edinburgh; you'll may be know it; but it's twenty years since I was in Edinburgh, and most of my friends are dead and gone now." With a thankful heart I sat down to partake of the pleasant meal she had provided for me, while I requested her to take a chair near the fire, and to give me some account of the family, into which I had entered, especially of my future pupil.

The delicious thick scalded cream, which, though it is called Devonshire cream, is quite as much used in Somersetshire; the fresh ham and eggs; and the home-made bread and butter, combined with a hearty appetite, made my tea appear a sumptuous one to me; and, while occupied in taking it, I had time to learn the following particulars:—

Lady Taylor had been married very young, and after the birth of her eldest son, who was now just three-and-twenty, had fallen into delicate health. Two successive children had been born, and died when a few months old, having been sickly from their birth. Another child was born, which seemed likely to meet the same fate; and Jean Morrison, the Scotchwoman whose acquaintance I had just made, had at that time entered the family as wet nurse to the sickly babe. She had become a widow in the first year of her marriage, and her own child had only lived six weeks. Being a stout healthy young woman, and bearing a high character for steadiness, she had been strongly recommended to Lady Taylor as a suitable person to take the charge of her delicate child. "A bonny wee thing she was," said the faithful nurse, her eyes filling with tears, "and ripe for glory; but oh it was hard—hard to part wi' her; and I thought Sir William and my lady would hae lost their reason altogether when she died."

"Did she die as young as the others?" "Oh dear no, she lived till she was seven years old, and such a bairn I never saw in all my life. The servants aye said she was too good for this world,

and it did seem that He was preparing her for a better."

"Is her sister Lucy at all like her?" I asked. "Miss Lucy like her sister Miss Winnifred!" exclaimed the good woman, as if in utter astonishment at the question. "No indeed, she is quite of another sort. And yet with all her tricks and nonsense, she has a kind heart, and I love her dearly; but like Miss Winnifred! No, no—we shall never see her like again. You see she had always delicate health, and that made her thoughtful and serious, and more like a grown-up person in some things; but she was as simple as a babe in all that was evil. Now Miss Lucy has never had a day's sickness, though my lady, after losing so many children, thought she must be delicate, and so she wouldna allow her to be contradicted in onything, or to be made to learn onything against her will; and now she is angry and vexed with the poor lamb for being contumacious and unruly."

"And Mr Taylor," I asked, "the eldest son, what sort of a person is he?" "Oh Mr William is a real kind-hearted young gentleman too, only a little proud and self-willed; but he's no proud to the servants either, but real kind and

considerate; and sometimes he'll come into my room, and tell me all the grand ploys he used to have at the University, or talk about his little sister Winnifred, and that's when I like him best, for then he shows what a warm heart he has. He loved her dearly, and took on awfully when she died; he was just ten years old then."

"There is another son, is there not?" was my next question. "Ou ay, that's Master Godfrey; I dare say he's a very nice young gentleman, but he's a great deal away at school, and I am not so well acquainted with him. He has as many tricks as Miss Lucy; and when he's at home there's no peace in the house between them; but I don't think he has her kind heart; any ways he's more selfish and inconsiderate. But, I see, Miss, you have done your tea, and I'm sure you must be weary, so I'll wish you good night, and dinna hurry yourself to-morrow in rising. I will bring you hot water when you ring, and Miss Lucy will not be taking breakfast with you to-morrow, as she's going with the rest of them to Taunton, and then to make some calls. My lady thought you would be glad of a day to rest yourself after your journey.

I was almost disappointed when I heard this;

with the bright hopes which had just risen in my mind, I quite longed to begin a task which I had persuaded myself was to issue in such happy results.

With a heart lightened of half its weight, and full of gratitude for the mercies I had received, I laid myself down that first night in a strange house, and enjoyed peaceful and refreshing slumbers.

Being quite alone the next day, I employed myself in writing to my dear mother, and to Julia Trenchard, and afterwards I went out to take a survey of my new abode. Hanfield Park was situated near the Quantock hills, a beautiful range, in some places crowned with rich wood, and in others presenting an appearance of bare moorland, more resembling the hills in the south of Scotland. My window commanded a view of these beautiful hills, and also of the sea, the Bristol Channel being only four miles distant. The house was a handsome, comparatively modern erection, having been built by the father of the present proprietor about fifty years before. He had entirely destroyed the old mansion to make room for the new, which was rather substantial and handsome, than picturesque or ornamental. But the glorious old trees, the growth of centuries, had been religiously spared,

and gave to the whole demesne a venerable air: you saw at a glance that it was a place which had long been possessed by the family. There was nothing upstart or *parvenu* about it. Two magnificent chestnuts grew just in front of the house on the lawn, which sloped downwards to a beautiful little stream that ran through the greater part of the grounds, and was now, in the absence of the foliage, distinctly visible from the house. Oaks, limes, and elms there were everywhere studding the park; and now, stripped of their summer vestments, they stood stretching their giant arms to the cold wintry sky. A little path led along the side of the stream to a small church, the spire of which could alone be visible in summer, but which was now distinctly seen through the naked trees which surrounded it, clothed with ivy, and adding considerably to the picturesqueness of the scene. Towards this little building I turned my steps, anxious if possible to get a sight of the monument erected in memory of the little Winnifred Taylor, which nurse had told me it contained.

I found the way somewhat longer than I had supposed, as the path followed all the vagaries of the little streamlet, but I felt amply rewarded for my walk, when, on coming close to the picturesque

little church, I discovered that the door was open. On entering the church I directed my steps to the chancel, and was not long in discovering what I sought. Surrounded by knights in armour, either kneeling or lying flat on their tombs, and other monuments to departed greatness, many extremely ancient, stood the tomb for which I was looking. It was of white marble, and one of Chantrey's most exquisite productions.

On a raised slab was the figure of a lovely child, resting its head on a cushion. It seemed in a deep and gentle slumber; one almost feared lest a sudden movement would disturb it. One tiny hand rested under the cheek, the other was thrown out upon the drapery which partially covered the figure, and held a half blown lily broken at the stem close to the flower, which seemed to be drooping.

I stood for a long time motionless, looking at this beautiful work of art; and at last I said to myself, half aloud, "If you resembled this, you must indeed have been the angel which nurse calls you."

"She was an angel," was spoken by a voice almost close beside me, which made me start, and drove all the blood from my cheek.

"Excuse me, Miss Mathieson," said Mr Taylor, for I had discovered by this time that it was he, "I did not intend to startle you; but having seen you enter, and heard your remark, I involuntarily gave my assent to it, forgetting that as you were ignorant of my being here, I should be giving you a fright. But, indeed, I always forget myself when I see that tomb, or think of her who lies beneath it. Is it not strange, Miss Mathieson, that one who has been so long dead should still have a power over me, which no living being possesses? She was indeed an angel; and now I think she is my guardian angel, for often the thought of her has stilled my passions when at the wildest, and stopped me in the career of vice and folly when nothing else could have restrained me. The simple, childlike, and yet earnest prayer she offered for me the day she died, has had more effect on me than all the sermons I ever heard."

"This may be the answer to her prayer," I said timidly, for I saw he paused as if waiting for an answer; "She being dead yet speaks."

"Perhaps it may be so," he said, absently; and I, bowing as I passed him, glided out of the church as quietly as possible, feeling my situation, with a

stranger so much affected and excited, a very awkward one.

I walked quickly home, and after taking my solitary dinner in the school-room, which adjoined my bed-room, I set myself busily to arranging and unpacking my things, that all might be in readiness for the morrow. I heard the carriage return about six o'clock, but Lucy did not come to see me, and I was making up my mind to passing the evening alone, when a servant came to me with a message from Lady Taylor, saying that she would be happy if I would join the family in the drawing-room at half-past eight.

As this was something like a royal invitation, almost tantamount to a command, I of course expressed my acquiescence, and at the appointed hour went to the drawing-room with fear and trembling, although exerting myself to the utmost to appear composed. While the tea was being handed about, the conversation was very desultory.

As soon, however, as the servants had retired, Lady Taylor, drawing her arm-chair near the fire, began to ask me some questions about my journey, etc., and evidently wished to be polite, but there was a pride in all she said or did, that effectually prevented me from feeling at ease with her.

Sir William spoke less, but with greater cordiality, and I soon felt quite at home with him. Lucy had fallen asleep, so I will try to describe her as she sits there, with her head reclining on the end of a sofa, and her arm thrown over the cushion.

Lucy Taylor was tall of her age, and slender, with dark hair, gray eyes, and a fine complexion. She was not, strictly speaking, pretty, but there was a grace in her movements (and she never could keep still), and a vivacity and intelligence in her expression, which made her very pleasing-looking. A rather long nose was the most marked feature in her face.

In one of the rather awkward pauses of conversation, I had employed myself in studying her features as she sat opposite to me, and a little behind her mother. My fixed gaze induced Lady Taylor to turn and look at her also, and with a voice of some displeasure, she called to her, "Lucy, Lucy, if you wish to sleep, you had much better go to bed."

Lucy looked up, and gradually becoming more fully awake, began fidgetting about the room. "I really wish, Lucy," said her mother, "that you would try and sit still; do take a book, child, and be quiet if you can."

"A book, mamma," said Lucy in a half comic tone, looking at me at the same time, "don't remind me of my misfortunes by talking of books; I shall have enough of them for some time to come."

"Well, then, play something on the piano."

"Practice! worse and worse," said Lucy; "why, I shall have nothing now every day but strumming and drumming on the piano. No indeed, mamma, you must let me just for this night enjoy my freedom, and do as the man did in church, that nurse tells about."

"And what did the man do?" said her father, tapping her face, as she had drawn her chair beside his.

"Oh, his clergyman was praising him for being so regular in coming to church, and told him he was glad to see him so attentive, when the man said, 'Ou ay, it was a fine thing to sit in church and stretch out his legs, looking frae him, and thinking about naething,' You see, Miss Mathieson, I can talk Scotch."

Sir William laughed, but Lady Taylor looked angry; "I really wish, Lucy, you would not make yourself so very familiar with the servants. Nurse is a respectable woman, no doubt, but you cannot

associate with such people without some contamination in mind and manners."

Mr Taylor looked up from his book, in which he had seemed entirely absorbed, and then said, almost in a tone of reproach, "I think from past experience, mother, we have little reason to fear contamination of mind or manners from companionship with nurse."

Lady Taylor sighed deeply, and made no reply; Sir William stirred the fire, and then seemed to look earnestly into it, and a painful silence ensued. It was broken by the entrance of a servant with the letter bag.

"Put mine into the library," said Sir William; "I never can be troubled to read my letters at night."

Mine I consigned to my pocket, while I longed to escape to my room, and read it, for it was from home.

Lady Taylor opened one or two addressed to her, and, having glanced them through, said to Sir William—"There is a letter from Lady Maria Savage; she is coming to spend some days with us next week."

Sir William shrugged his shoulders with a comical expression as he looked towards Lucy,

who had started on hearing the announcement, and exclaimed, "The horrid old witch."

I remembered that I had received the same appellation, and so I was not prepared on this account to think the worse of the lady to whom it was applied.

"What brings the old hag here?" said Mr Taylor, looking up; "it's rather provoking, for I did not wish to leave home just yet, but now I'm off, a special engagement obliges me to leave the very day her ladyship arrives."

"Really, William," said Lady Taylor, "you are absurd. Lady Maria is a person of high family, and a cousin of your father's; and such prejudices as the one you entertain against her ought to be overcome. You left home the last time she was here, and if you do so again, it will seem quite marked, and might offend her, and place me in an unpleasant predicament."

"I am sorry for the latter part of it, mother; but as to offending her, I can't say I should break my heart about that; indeed, I should rather enjoy doing so than otherwise."

"It is my wish that you should remain at home, William," said Lady Taylor, in a very decided tone. Her son's face assumed an expression which

did not promise a very pleasant answer, when Sir William, evidently anxious to prevent anything like an altercation, broke in upon the conversation by asking me if I had been out at all during the day. I replied that I had. Lucy, who had changed her seat three times within the last five minutes, immediately asked—"Where did you go, Miss Mathieson?"

"I went as far as the church," was my reply. Lady Taylor sighed again, and I then, and have often since remarked, that her face softened as well as saddened when any circumstance brought her lost darling to her recollection. "You would not," she said, in a gentler tone than I had yet heard her speak, "gain admittance into the church?"

"Yes, I found the door open," I answered.

"Who could have been so careless as to leave the door open? Lucy, ring the bell, this must be inquired into."

"I opened the door, and was in the church when Miss Mathieson entered," said Mr Taylor.

Lady Taylor cast a quick and piercing glance on me, which instantly brought the blood to my cheeks. She was silent for a few moments, and then said to her son—"As you are determined on going away while Lady Maria is paying her visit

here, perhaps you might as well go and stay a few days with Lord Somerton. You know he has invited you several times to go to his seat in Norfolk." A sarcastic smile played on Mr Taylor's lips as he answered—"Oh, but you know, mother, you said yourself it would scarcely do for me to leave, and, after all, I do not know but what you are right. She is, as you say, well connected, and a cousin of my father's, and ought not to be offended, and if I went to Lord Somerton's, she might suppose that I preferred the company of his pretty daughters to that of her ugly old self, and that would be the unkindest cut of all. I am afraid I must face her, after all."

Lady Taylor looked angry and baffled, but again Sir William interposed by asking me to play. I went to the piano, and after playing for a short time, withdrew to my own room, glad to be alone again, and to have an opportunity of reading the letter which I had got from home. It was rather a motley production, containing as it did, a short letter from all, even down to little Emma, who had got George to guide her hand while she dictated a letter to me, telling me that my doll was quite well again now, but had had a cold after I left, and hoping I should come back to-morrow.

I was just reading my letter over for a second time, when a servant came to say that Lady Taylor wished to speak to me in her dressing-room. I of course obeyed, and found Lady Taylor sitting in her pink flannel dressing-gown. She was still a very handsome woman, and her present dishabille, by taking off something of her usual stiffness of appearance, shewed her to great advantage. Her maid was brushing her hair when I entered, but she told her she might leave the room, as she wished to speak to me alone.

When the servant was gone, Lady Taylor explained the cause of her wish to speak with me, which was merely that she might give me some idea of the course she wished me to pursue with her daughter.

"You will find her," she said, "very wild and unmanageable, I fear; she has too long been accustomed to do as she liked without any control. I feared her constitution might partake of the delicacy which characterised my other girl, and have, perhaps, been foolishly indulgent, and I do not know whether I have acted wisely in placing her under the charge of one so very young as yourself, and who must necessarily be so inexperienced; however," she added, "I have endeavoured to act

for the best, and at any rate the experiment must now be made."

Lady Taylor spoke more kindly, and with a tone of more feeling than she had yet addressed to me. I told her that I knew well how young and inexperienced I was, but that if this could in any measure be compensated by an earnest will, and resolute determination to do my duty to the best of my ability, I could truly say that I brought these to my work. I spoke out of the very depths of my heart, and something of my ardour must have escaped in my manner, for Lady Taylor smiled, and then sighed.

"Ah," she said, "you have yet to learn how many disappointments often attend on exertions, however earnestly and sincerely made, but I do not wish to discourage you. Make the effort, and if you can succeed in taming Lucy, or making her more amenable to authority, and more ladylike in her manners, you will have conferred a lasting benefit on Sir William and myself; for although Sir William is often amused, and rather encourages her in her nonsense, he would like quite as ill as I should, that she should grow up a coarse and hoydenish woman. To-morrow, being Saturday, it will not be necessary to give her very regular

lessons. You can rather employ it in finding out what she can do; she has always had masters when we were in London, but her education has been very desultory, and, I fear, too much neglected."

It had been arranged that Lucy should take her meals with me in our pleasant school-room, and only descend to the drawing-room after her parents had dined, unless specially sent for. The following morning I had to wait some time for my breakfast, as Lucy was not ready, nor would she make the least haste in dressing, although perfectly aware that I was waiting for her, and in spite of the earnest entreaties of nurse, "to be a good bairn, and not displease her governess the very first day."

She made her appearance at last with the utmost composure, as if nothing had occurred, and seemed in particularly good spirits, evidently thinking she had gained a victory. I told her that as it was the first day, I had waited breakfast for her, but that I should not do so in future, but should take mine, and then send away the breakfast things, only reserving a roll for her. She did not seem to mind my threat much, but chatted, laughed, and fidgetted all breakfast time, without appear-

ing to feel the least restraint with me, either as a stranger or as her governess.

Immediately after breakfast I told her to bring me her books and her Bible, as I wished to begin the day with reading a chapter from it, and making her commit a verse to memory. She jumped up with a willingness which pleased me, got out her books, and laid them on the table, then saying that her Bible was in her own room, she left the apartment.

After some time I began to wonder what had become of her, and looking into her bed-room, which was next my own, I found that she was not there. Nurse, however, was in the room, so I asked her if she knew what was become of Miss Lucy.

"Oh, she was here some time since, but she ran down stairs, and now it will not be easy to catch her; there's no knowing where she may be by this time. I only hope she has not gone out, for her bonnet and shawl are here, and it's a real cold day."

Annoyed at her having thus escaped me, and fearful lest she might catch cold, I hastened down stairs, followed by nurse. I looked into the drawing-room, dining-room, library and billiard room, which

were all as yet untenanted, as the elder members of the family did not breakfast till ten o'clock. No traces could I see of Lucy, nor could any of the servants give me an idea of where she might be found. One of them thought he had seen her go into the drawing-room, but it was nearly a quarter of an hour before. I went again into the drawing-room, and noticed, what I had not before observed, that the French window which opened on the lawn was open; I went forward to it, and looked about in all directions for the truant, but could see nothing, and was just about returning into the room, when I thought I heard a suppressed laugh. I again looked out, but could see no one; however, on the sound being repeated somewhat more distinctly, I found that it proceeded from above me, and looking up, discovered Lucy perched very nearly at the top of one of the large chestnuts in front of the house.

Nurse, who had been assisting me in my search, cried out immediately on seeing her, "Oh, Miss Lucy, do come down; you'll catch your death of cold, sitting up there like a craw in a mist; and Miss Mathieson will get cold too, standing there without onything on her head, waiting for you."

"You had better get Miss Mathieson her bonnet

and shawl, nurse," said the provoking girl; "I'm afraid she'll have some time longer to wait."

My first emotion on discovering Lucy had been one of fear, for having been brought up in a town, the idea of scrambling up a tree to such a height seemed most perilous. My second was one of anger, and I was looking up with the intention of saying something to show my displeasure, when the absurdity of our relative positions, and my utter helplessness, if she chose to maintain her post of advantage, struck me in such a ridiculous light, that I burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter.

Lucy looked at me for a moment in some astonishment, and then said, "Well, that is good-natured, I must say, and you are not half such a cross crab as I expected, so I'll come down. I thought you would be putting on a cross face, and giving me a long lecture, and then it would have been such fun to sit up here and listen—but I'll come down;" and she began to descend with the agility of a squirrel, and went up stairs with me to the school-room, where we continued to be excellent friends for the rest of the day. This small circumstance showed me something of the character of my pupil, and of the necessity of adopting a conciliatory method with her; but I was naturally of a very

hasty disposition, and I had much to struggle with in myself, as well as in the faults of my pupil. I sought, however, assistance where it is never denied, and though doomed to many bitter disappointments, had the satisfaction, though not till long after I left Hanfield, of knowing that my labours had not been in vain. But I must not anticipate.

The following week I began my work in good earnest, and found Lucy at times wonderfully assiduous and docile, while at others it seemed impossible to make her fix her attention, or even to sit still sufficiently long to acquire any good from her lessons; besides this, the foolish indulgence, which Lady Taylor herself acknowledged had already done her so much harm, continued to be exercised towards her, and often undid the little good, which, with much patience and labour, I had succeeded in effecting. Oh, if parents, especially among the higher classes, could but have the smallest idea of the injury they do their children, and the check which they put in the way of those whom they employ for their training, by their foolish and ill-advised indulgence, they might, at a very small sacrifice of personal and present gratification, insure a far greater amount of happiness to their children,

while they would give a much higher incentive to duty and exertion to their instructors.

The expected visit of Lady Maria Savage was not forgotten by Lucy, who mentioned it once or twice in the beginning of the week to me, and always with expressions of ill-will and dislike towards the lady in question. Other visitors being expected about the same time, it was decided that Mr Taylor could not with propriety leave home, so the family party continued the same as when I arrived; but I saw little of them, as I was occupied with Lucy during the forenoons, and my evenings were spent by me alone—Lucy generally going to the drawing-room the moment that dinner was over, and remaining with her parents for the rest of the evening.

After the cheerful social evenings to which I had been all my life accustomed, it will be readily believed how long and dreary these seemed to me; but I had been told that I was to expect them, so I tried with music, drawing, and work, to make them pass as cheerfully as possible, though I sometimes found a tear rolling down my cheek, as the thought involuntarily crossed me, of how my mother and my dear brothers were employed at the same moment.

Lady Maria Savage arrived on the Thursday,

and on the same day came a Mr and Mrs Russell, with two daughters, nice girls of thirteen and fifteen, who were to take their meals with us in the schoolroom, as their mother did not approve of late hours for them.

Lady Maria being very rich, and Sir William the nearest relation she had living, both he and his lady were very polite to her; but all the scoldings and warnings of her mother could not induce Lucy to follow their example, and she was constantly either saying or doing something displeasing to her ill-tempered relative.

On the evening of the arrival of their guests, I was requested to join the family circle, as Lady Maria was extremely fond of music, and my talents were to be put into requisition for her entertainment.

I had heard so much of her, that I was rather anxious to see her, and, after the solitary evenings I had lately spent, I looked forward with additional pleasure to being once more in society.

Besides the inmates of the house, several strangers had been invited to dinner, so that when all were assembled, there was quite a large party gathered together. There were a good many young people of the company, and these, attracted by the free-masonry of youth, gathered together

into one corner, and began talking and laughing, while I, left sitting alone, soon wished for the quiet evenings I had lately thought so dull and tedious, my present position being not less solitary, and I had the additional pain of feeling, that though with others, I was not one of them.

Sad and almost bitter thoughts were passing through my mind, when I heard Lady Maria Savage say, in a tone which she did not attempt to lower, "So that is your governess, Lady Taylor; a great deal too young, I should think, and far too soft-looking." The latter fault was certainly one which did not seem ever to have attached to her ladyship, who was a big, sharp-featured woman, with a voice and manner like a man, though there was nothing that could be called low or vulgar about her. She was one of those people who always speak out exactly what they think, utterly regardless of the feelings of others, and was in consequence extremely disliked by all who knew her, while many feared her caustic remarks. It may readily be supposed that her present observation did not tend to soothe my already excited feelings. I felt my face become scarlet, as much from indignation as from any other feeling; but at that instant, a gentleman who had also heard the remark, and

seen my rising colour, came and took a seat by my side, and addressed me in such a kind and benevolent manner, that I soon forgot all my grievances in the pleasure of conversing with him.

He spoke to me of Edinburgh and of its beauties. He said he had visited it many years before, and should never forget the hospitality he had received while there. He had dined once with a Mr Mathieson who lived in Charlotte Square—was I any relation of his? When I said that I was his daughter, he immediately replied, "Oh, then, you are a sort of old acquaintance, for I remember two or three children being in the drawing-room when we came up from dinner; but I daresay you do not remember me, though perhaps I am the least altered of the two." He then introduced himself as Mr Russell, the father of the two girls who had spent the afternoon with me.

His conversation was most agreeable and instructive, independent of the kindness which led him to speak to one in so forlorn a position as mine, and I felt amused and grateful.

Our intercourse was, however, not of very long duration, as I was requested by Lady Taylor to play something. My performance was honoured by the approval of Lady Maria, who asked me

several questions about the masters I had had, the style of music I played, etc., etc., and was very condescending and gracious. Indeed she was not a proud woman; her faults were those of temper, and were more belonging to the individual than the class. She was excessively fond of music, and when she succeeded me at the piano, I had real pleasure in listening to her performance, for she played with much taste, and had evidently been well taught. Her singing, however, was less successful; her voice, which must always have been harsh, was now somewhat cracked, as she was certainly upwards of fifty. She sung, however, and had just concluded the first verse of Moore's beautiful melody, "The harp that once through Tara's halls," when a loud burst of laughter from the recess into which most of the young people had retired, made her look round with a face ominous with wrath. I directly looked to Lucy, as from the moment Lady Maria had placed herself at the piano, she had been speaking loud, and evidently trying to interrupt the music, in spite of the signs which I had made to her to be quiet. She had, however, been silent since the song began, and now, as I looked towards her, her face was the very pattern of propriety and

good behaviour, while all the rest seemed half smothered with their attempts to subdue a laugh, in which they had indulged, it seemed, in spite of themselves.

Towards the close of the second verse, there was another burst of laughter, more subdued in sound, but apparently not less hearty, and again Lucy's face bore such an expression of extreme propriety, that I felt convinced she was at the bottom of the mischief, whatever it might be, as otherwise she would have been foremost among the laughers. I accordingly watched her, and just as the song was about being finished, I had some difficulty in keeping my own countenance, when I saw Lucy take the elastic which confined the net which she wore on her hair, and draw it down so as to catch the tip of her nose, which she pulled up almost to her eyebrows, making a mouth as if singing, and imitating at the same time the rather exaggerated motions of Lady Maria, as she accompanied herself on the piano.

Again the young people laughed, while in an instant Lucy removed the lever which she had applied to her nose, and sat, as before, with a quiet look of innocence, which only served to increase the mirth of the others. Lady Maria rose from

the piano with an expression of indignation in her countenance, and said, as she passed Lucy—"This has been some of your doings, Miss Lucy; I never saw such an ill-bred spoiled monkey in my life. I am sure I pity the governess who has charge of you."

Lucy made no reply, but made a hideous face as soon as her back was turned, which again set the young people off laughing, though some of them, and especially the two Miss Russells, were evidently shocked.

I went and begged her to behave better, and to remember that, as a guest in her father's house, she ought to treat Lady Maria with more civility, but she only laughed, and said she "hated the old creature." It was neither a time nor place for arguing with her, so I was obliged to drop the subject, and the rest of the evening passed off quietly.

As the Miss Russells were only to stay two days, Lucy was not to have any lessons during their visit; but we arranged at breakfast time, that we would go out for a long walk, the morning being very fine. We therefore all dispersed to dress a little before ten o'clock; but when we were ready and assembled in the schoolroom, Lucy was missing.

She appeared just as I was about to leave the room to look for her, and in answer to my inquiry, why she had not begun to dress, only said she "had been playing with puss." Just as I sent her off to dress, Lady Maria passed the schoolroom on her way down to the breakfast parlour, as she was punctual to a moment at all her meals. Lucy spoke to her more politely than she had yet done, and I hoped that the lecture which I had given her that morning, on the impropriety of her conduct on the previous evening, had had some effect. Several of the elder party had assembled for breakfast, while Lucy was dressing, but as we passed the door of the breakfast parlour there seemed to be some unusual commotion going on there. The bell had been rung violently a few minutes before; we could hear Lady Maria's voice speaking in loud and evidently angry tones; and the footman, who was leaving the room as we passed, seemed to have great difficulty in keeping his countenance, and indulged in a broad grin as he shut the door. He looked towards Lucy, whose countenance wore the same expression of severe goodness, which she had put on the night before; so I instantly suspected mischief.

"What have you been doing, Lucy?" I said, the moment we had left the house.

"I was only playing with puss, Miss Mathieson," she said, looking as demure as possible.

"Lucy, I know you have been playing some trick in the breakfast room; tell me what you have done."

"Well, I only put puss into that fur bag that Lady Maria puts her feet into every morning. You know they put a hot water bottle into it generally, so I took that out, and put puss in, because she is very fond of lying in a warm place, poor thing."

"Lucy, it was but yesterday that you told me Lady Maria had a special antipathy to cats; how could you be so very naughty," I said, while I was scarcely old enough myself at the time, not to feel half inclined to laugh at her performance.

"Oh," she said, "Miss Mathieson, you need not look so very solemn, for I see the corners of your lips curling up, and I know you would laugh if you could; how I wish I had been there; it must have been such fun to see Lady Maria jump up as if she had been bitten. I only hope she did not hurt poor puss, who seemed to think she never had been in such a comfortable bed; she purred with all her might when I put her in."

We pursued our walk, but it was an uncomfortable one. I felt sorry for the displeasure which

I knew awaited Lucy on her return, and puzzled how I was ever to exercise control over one so independent of the opinions of others, and indifferent to their favour. The two Miss Russells, who had laughed heartily at first on hearing of Lucy's trick, had been too well brought up not to see its impropriety when they thought it over, and they tried gently to persuade her that she had been wrong.

They were sweet girls. There was no affectation, or high pretension of goodness, but so much simplicity and good nature in their remonstrances, that Lucy, who would have resented such interference if otherwise offered, could not but take it in good part. She seemed the only indifferent person of our party, and but for her, I believe, we should scarcely have spoken. She chatted merrily, hummed tunes, made jokes, and seemed the gayest of the gay, though she could not but be aware of the storm that awaited her at home.

I felt quite annoyed at her indifference; but when I came to know her better, I found that she often made an appearance of nonchalance a mask for concealing her feelings when she was much excited; and that in reality the grave faces we wore, and the gentle rebukes of her

young friends, would be very distressing to her—far more so than the scolding which awaited her on her return.

We lengthened our walk as much as possible, feeling, all of us, a dread of going home, but we were obliged to return at last, and the first object we saw, stationed like a sentinel at the drawing-room window, was Lady Maria, who turned her head as soon as we came in sight, and seemed to speak to some one in the room, but immediately looked towards us again, and with no friendly glances, as we could see on coming nearer to the house.

Lady Taylor was standing in the hall as we entered; she had just come out of the drawing-room, followed by Sir William, who looked half angry, half amused. Lady Taylor's expression was, however, very unequivocally that of grave displeasure, as she said, "Lucy, follow me into the library. Miss Mathieson, may I request you to accompany us." I followed like a criminal, while Lucy walked after her mother with a firm step, and a look of passive indifference, not at all likely to soften her displeasure.

"Will you never learn, Lucy," she began, "to give over tricks which would disgrace a boy, but

which in a girl of your age and position in society, are altogether intolerable."

"What tricks, mamma?" replied Lucy with the same unmoved countenance.

"Lucy, you shall not trifle with me; I know that you put the cat into Lady Maria's foot-warmer, knowing all the time her great antipathy to cats. I have told you that for many reasons I wished to keep on good terms with Lady Maria, and yet you have offended her deeply, thus showing an utter disregard of my wishes, as well as of the feelings of a guest in your father's house."

"Oh, mamma, but I am sure it must have been such fun to see Lady Maria jump up as if a snake had bitten her, and then all the people looking so astonished, and wondering what was the matter with her. I wish I had been there to see it."

This speech was addressed much more to her father than to her mother, and he immediately, as she had evidently expected, took her part. "Pooh, pooh, we have had enough of this; 'twas a foolish trick, no doubt, and you are a saucy comical little minx, Miss Lucy, but I suppose you will learn wisdom in time; so run away and keep out of Lady Maria's sight for a time, and don't be playing off any more of your nonsense on her; she is a

dangerous person to meddle with. You have a troublesome little customer to deal with, Miss Mathieson, but I hope you will some day bring her into better order."

And so all this formidable display of anger ended in nothing, and we were dismissed from the library, leaving the parents under the evident impression that they had reproved their child in a manner which ought to be very profitable.

I have entered thus fully into an account of the first week of my residence at Hanfield, to show the character with which I had to contend in my pupil, and the degree of support I received from her parents.

Such as she was on first making her acquaintance, did Lucy Taylor continue to be till I left Hanfield, about four years after, except that she was certainly more tractable and obedient, and loved me so entirely, that she would sometimes check herself in her wildest vagaries, if she thought she was giving me real pain; and, wayward as she was, most heartily did I return her affection, and continue to hope almost against hope, that her character might yet develope itself into that of a sensible and useful woman. I shall pass over the remainder of the time that I stayed at Hanfield

very cursorily, and relate in my next chapter the circumstances which led to my leaving.

The life of a governess is one so much of routine, that, except we were to speak of the inward struggles, the ardent longings, the disappointed hopes, the anxious fears, with all of which her task is accompanied, there is generally little to tell.

While at Hanfield, one day passed much like another, and even when we visited town—which we did twice during the time I was with Lady Taylor's family—this brought but little change to me, as there I continued to give Lucy her lessons as usual, with the assistance of French, music, and drawing masters. I visited my kind friends, the Trenchards, it is true, but my visits were unaccompanied by any incident worth recording.

During this time, I was changed from a happy girl with buoyant and often volatile spirits, to a thoughtful, serious woman, though still not quite twenty-two. But I was happy. I felt that I was in the path of duty—that I was assisting my beloved mother and family, and that any little influence which I exerted over my pupil was for good; and though experience had taught me by many bitter disappointments, that the sanguine hopes I had at first entertained were fallacious, I

learnt to face the realities of life, and gained courage for new conflicts even from defeat itself. I learnt to realize in my own experience, what the poet has since embodied so beautifully in verse :—

"Life is real, life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal;
Death thou art, to death returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

"Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act that each to-morrow,
Find us farther than to-day."

CHAPTER IV.

"There is a war through which at length
We struggle into greater strength;
For as opposing evil wields
The weapons of its many hands,
The soul is human when it yields,
Divine when it withstands."—PATRICK SCOTT.

I HAD been nearly four years at Hanfield, and, as I mentioned in the close of the last chapter, but little change had taken place during this period. For upwards of two years everything had gone on unusually quietly, as Mr Taylor had been absent on the continent, and Lady Taylor's health had been very delicate, so that but few guests had visited the house—a circumstance which was of great advantage to Lucy, who had nothing consequently to disturb or interrupt her studies, and had made very satisfactory progress.

A few weeks before the time when I resume my narrative, Mr Taylor had come back from his continental tour; but, except that we often met him

in our walks, I seldom saw him, as I still passed my evenings in the school-room. I was not often, however, all the evening alone, as Lucy would generally come in and sit with me for some time, or in the summer evenings take long walks with me, on which occasions we usually took our work and a book with us, and after a ramble among the Quantock Hills, or sometimes even walking as far as the Alabaster Rocks, which overhang the sea in the northern part of Somersetshire, we would sit down and read, work, or chat, as the humour seized us. On these occasions, we were invariably accompanied by Frisk, a pet dog of Lucy's, which richly earned its name by the gambols and tricks it played during our walks—indeed, Lucy and he seemed to be kindred natures, and to vie with each other which should best deserve the name, for although now nearly sixteen, Lucy still continued to be as restless and playful as a child.

It was on a lovely evening towards the end of June, that Lucy, Frisk, and I, set off for one of these strolls, but, being rather later than usual in leaving home, it was agreed that we should not go farther than to a grassy knoll in the park, rather more than a mile from the house, which was a favourite resting-place with us, as it commanded a lovely view. Our

way lay for some distance along the side of the little stream which flowed near the house; then, crossing a rustic bridge, a meadow path led us to a large fish-pond with grassy banks, at the farther end of which, crowned with a clump of beautiful trees, was the knoll in question. The weather had been unusually dry and sultry, and the grass was extremely slippery, and as the water in the pond was in some parts very deep, and the bank at its side steep and undermined, I several times called to Lucy, who, as usual, was playing all manner of antics with Frisk, to take care and not go too near the water. She was holding something in her hand, which she offered him to play with, and then held up beyond his reach, while he was running backward, barking, and occasionally making a spring to catch what she held, when, going too near the edge of the bank, he fell into the water, and seemed unable to regain the side. Lucy bent eagerly forward to see if she could render him some assistance, when her foot slipped on the dry grass, and with a loud shriek she fell forwards into the water. For one instant I stood paralyzed with horror, then summoning all my presence of mind, I considered what I had best do. Most providentially I had put my plaid over my arm when we went out, thinking

that, as the dews were heavy, we might be glad of it to sit upon. In an instant, therefore, I threw it over the bank, standing as far back as possible, and in another moment Frisk had it firmly clenched in his teeth. I was obliged to pull him out, and he directly set forth as fast as he could to the house. Again I threw in my shawl in an agony of fear, for Lucy had a second time disappeared under the water; but she came up again, and I had the satisfaction of feeling her seize the shawl. All my efforts, however, were insufficient to get her on shore; I was not strong enough to do so alone, and she seemed utterly unable to help herself. Still she held convulsively by the shawl, while I shouted at the top of my voice for assistance.

I have no idea how long I remained in this situation—to me it seemed an age—when I again heard Frisk barking at my side, and the voice of Mr Taylor telling me to give him the shawl; he dragged Lucy farther up than I had been able to do, then, getting hold of her by the shoulders, he drew her on the bank. She was quite unconscious, and lay like a corpse, with her head on my knees, and her dripping hair hanging over her face. There was nearly a quarter of an hour of terrible suspense, during which, Mr Taylor, who had taken off his

coat and wrapped it round her, assisted me in chafing her temples, and endeavouring to restore animation. At length a faint sigh, and a slight tremor, told us that our dreadful forebodings had been unfounded, and that she still lived. Breaking silence for the first time since we had taken her out of the water, Mr Taylor asked me whether he or I should remain with her, while the other went to the house to procure assistance for carrying her home. I begged him to go, as I thought he would be quicker than I, and remained watching the slowly returning life of my precious charge; at length her colour came, she looked up wildly for an instant, and said, "You have saved my life; Oh, I could not have died, but you have saved me."

"Dearest Lucy, compose yourself; yes, you are saved, thanks be to God; but now be quiet, my darling, and do not agitate yourself."

"Saved me," she repeated, in a low voice, and then was silent, and I soon became aware, by the heavy fall of her head, and the paleness of her cheek, that she had fainted.

I had no means of restoring her, and sat, therefore, waiting with impatience the expected assistance from the house; nor was it long before the welcome sound of near voices and footsteps reached my ear.

"My child, where is she?" were the first words I distinctly heard, and Lady Taylor came running as fast as the delicate state of her health allowed her. "Lucy, my darling, speak to me, look at me," she said, as she came near enough to see the inanimate form of her daughter.

"Merciful heavens, she is dead," said Sir William, in a low, tremulous tone, and bending over her with a face of agony, "Lucy, Lucy, look up, my angel," he said, as he strove with a trembling hand to put back the dripping hair from her forehead.

"I believe and trust she is not dead," I said; "she was conscious, and spoke to me only a few minutes since, but the very recollection of the narrow escape she has had, agitated her so much that she fainted."

By this time nurse was with us, and displayed her presence of mind and forethought by producing a couple of blankets, in which she tenderly wrapped Lucy, and then applied a bottle of strong smelling salts to her nose. In a few minutes she opened her eyes again, looked round confusedly for a moment, and then, as her eyes rested on me, she gave another look of horror, and again muttered, "Saved me."

As no carriage could have been well brought

to the place where we were, a mattress had been placed on a palliass, and Lucy was now laid on these, and carried home by the servants. What a contrast between the half-lifeless form now being borne back, and the buoyant lightsome creature who but an hour since had tripped so gaily along! truly we know not what a day or an hour may bring forth.

For many days Lucy's life was despaired of; the shock to her nerves, and the drenching she had got, brought on fever, and for about a week she was, with but short intervals of exhaustion, in a constant state of delirium—a dread of death, and gratitude to me for rescuing her, seemed the prevailing ideas in her mind. Her screams for help were sometimes piercing and most heart-rending, and these paroxysms usually terminated in her using the same words she had uttered on first recovering consciousness after she was taken out of the water—" you have saved me;" after which she would for a time remain tranquil, and submit with the most child-like obedience, to take the remedies which had been sent, or allow us to arrange her pillows and bed-clothes, casting on me on these occasions, looks of such deep and heartfelt affection, as will never be effaced from my

memory. Nurse and I never left her bedroom night or day; we took it by turns to lie on a sofa near the bed, and endeavour to snatch a brief repose from time to time. Lady Taylor had been in bed ever since Lucy's accident, the shock she had sustained, and the exertion she had made in walking so far, having brought on a serious illness. Sir William was constantly going from one sick room to the other, trying to keep up his wife's spirits, while he himself seemed in utter despair. It was pitiful to see the kind-hearted old man; at times, when Lucy was more than usually frantic, he would walk up and down the room in a state of agony not to be painted, but would never leave it till he saw her more composed.

Nothing struck me more during this time than the conduct of nurse, the consistency and beauty of whose Christian character shone out strikingly on this trying occasion, forming a remarkable proof, that however insignificant may be their position in life, every one may exert a beneficial influence upon, and win the confidence and respect of those around them. She was indeed an exemplification of what the Apostle refers to, when he speaks of "living epistles known and read of all men." I no longer wondered that under her fos-

tering care, and necessarily thrown so much into her society from the delicacy of her health, the little Winnifred had imbibed from her such deep and simple piety, which in the effect her memory still produced on her parents and brother, seemed, even at such a distance of time, to shed a hallowing influence around her very tomb.

For six days Lucy continued in the same dangerous state. A medical man from Taunton came daily to see her, and usually left directions with me as to what was best to be done. On the morning of the seventh day he said that there was a decided change on her, whether for the better or worse he could scarcely decide; the pulse had fallen, but was so very weak, that the question now was, whether she had still sufficient strength left to enable her to rally; she had been in a sort of stupor for some hours, which might end in a refreshing sleep, or in that sleep that knows no waking. Lady Taylor was so far recovered, that she was able on that day to pay a short visit to Lucy's bedside, and both Sir William and she buoyed themselves up with the hope that she slept, and would be better when she awoke. Judging what they would suffer from this state of suspense, by the intense anxiety I felt myself, after hearing what the

doctor had said, I determined not to mention his opinion to the parents, unless I saw such a decided change for the worse, as should render it necessary to make them acquainted with her danger. Nurse and I stationed ourselves, one on each side of her bed, watching her pale impassive countenance, and eagerly listening for any change in her manner of breathing. We sat there in unbroken silence, except that I could occasionally hear nurse utter a few words of earnest prayer, or repeat some text of precious promise. Our hearts were too full for words, and four weary hours rolled heavily by, when Lucy made a slight movement, turned round on her side, and muttered something; her breathing became softer and more regular, and about a quarter of an hour afterwards we felt convinced that she had fallen into a sweet and natural sleep.

No sooner had this blessed conviction entered our minds than we both knelt down, and engaged for some minutes in mental devotion, pouring out our fervent thanks for the recovery which we now felt we might venture to hope for. As soon as I had risen from my knees, I went to acquaint the parents that the crisis had passed favourably, and that the doctor had given us reason to hope that if she slept well, she would awake to consciousness.

The rays of a glorious setting sun were shining into her room, and illuminating her face, which was turned towards the window, when she gave a slight sigh and looked up. For a moment she was evidently confused. She looked at me, then at nurse, and said, "What is the matter?"

In another instant a flood of recollection seemed to rush over her mind, her face flushed, and then became paler than before—her whole body seemed to quiver with emotion. "You saved me, dearest Miss Mathieson," was all she could say, and I feared a return of the delirium, but in a few minutes she became more composed, and only added, "It was dreadful, dreadful, but it is passed now."

She was very fond of music, and often liked me to sing to her. Thinking that perhaps it would be wiser not to speak, as I could scarcely do so without agitating her, I began to sing in a low voice the words of a sweet hymn—

"My times are in Thy hands,
Whatever they may be,
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,
As best may seem to Thee.

My times are in Thy hands,
My God I wish them there,
A Father's hand will never cause
His child a needless tear."

I paused for a moment to recall the words of the following verse, when Lucy opened her eyes, which she had closed while I was singing—"That is it, Miss Mathieson, it was a Father's hand which sent you to save me; I did not deserve it; oh, I have been a sinner in God's sight, but He has spared my life; how can I ever thank Him for His mercy?"

"At present, dearest Lucy, you must show that you are thankful for the life which has been so mercifully preserved, by taking care not to place it again in danger, which any agitation or much speaking would unavoidably do."

"I will be quite quiet then," she said, "but at any rate sing to me; it soothes me to hear your voice." I continued singing in a low voice, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing her fall into a gentle slumber.

It was several days before we could venture to allow her to speak, or in any way to be excited; and her submission to our wishes, and instant compliance with any request made to her to keep quiet, were very striking in one naturally so petulant and restless. At the end of some days, the doctor gave her leave to speak more freely, and her conversation almost invariably turned upon the subject which most occupied her thoughts—the danger

which she had incurred, and my instrumentality in her preservation.

One day, about three weeks after her accident, we were alone, and she had as usual been expatiating on the fearful thoughts which had passed through her mind when first she had fallen into the water; suddenly pausing, she said, "Why was I so afraid to die? I have often heard that Winnifred was not afraid, though she knew for weeks before her death that she could not recover. Yet she never seemed afraid, but sometimes spoke as if she wished to die."

I answered, "She had learnt what the Apostle meant when he said, 'To me to depart and to be with Christ is far better,' but remember it was only with the assurance that he would be with Christ, that he could wish to depart."

"I have indeed no such assurance, but I am not so sure that a fear for the future was entirely the cause of my dread. It seemed to me, it seems to me still, so sad to be cut off from this beautiful world, just as every thing seems so bright and joyous before me; to be cut off from all that has been near and dear to me; to lie in silence and forgotten, while the world still goes on busily and merrily, facing the wind and storm, or basking in

the soft sunshine; and after a very short time, not one of all the busy crowd giving more than an occasional transient thought to her who could have loved as warmly, acted as earnestly, enjoyed as fully as any of them. Oh, it is a dreadful thought, and when to it is added uncertainty of one's future fate, it is too, too appalling." She shuddered and was silent.

I felt unable to reply. That faith could triumph over the fear of death, take its sting away, and give the victory over the grave, I knew; but I was but a babe in such knowledge, and wanted that experimental acquaintance with the truth of it, to be able to produce conviction in the mind of another. Nurse was sitting at the foot of the bed sewing, she looked towards me, and seeing that I hesitated to answer, she took up the conversation in her own homely, practical way.

"Dear Miss Lucy," she said, "before you can think otherwise than you do now, you must feel something of the reality of another world, and of your actual state in this. A beggar who is starving, would be willing enough to go to another country if he could be sure of bettering his condition; while a rich man who has 'much goods laid up for many years,' would be ill to persuade to give

up all for something better in prospect; and so it is with us."

"But is it necessary that this world should become a sort of prison-house to us, before we can desire to leave it—must we be miserable here, that we may wish for a better state?" said Lucy.

"I do not think that is quite the way to put it, Miss," replied nurse; "while we seek for a better country, that is an heavenly, that is not to prevent us enjoying, with thankful hearts, the good that God has given us here."

"There can be no doubt," I said, "that death, being the wages, or punishment for sin, is a state from which man naturally shrinks; it is therefore mercifully ordered that sickness and sorrow should be the means used to loosen our hold of this present life, and lead us to cling to that promise of a future state of existence, in which it is expressly said, sighing and sorrow shall be no more."

"Yet there seems something dreadful in the thought, that the only way to escape from a slavish dread of death, is to live in such a state of wretchedness, as shall make death seem preferable," said Lucy, with a deep sigh.

"Oh no, Miss Lucy, it is not so, for though God does in His mercy remind us by trials that

this is not our home, still He has also given us all things richly to enjoy; and we shall not enjoy His blessings the less for knowing that He who died for us, rose again, that we also might rise to the possession of the inheritance purchased for us by His blood."

"Surely that is a more cheerful view of the case, dear Lucy," said I; "could we but realise that glorious inheritance, and accept the mingled cup of joy and sorrow as from a loving father's hand, it might indeed temper our enjoyment of earthly blessings, but it would also cheer us in the hour of trial."

Lucy's face brightened. "Yes," she said, "and there is something elevating in the thought; it seems to give an aim to life, while it leaves a feeling of childlike dependence on our Father in heaven; but still I think the realisation would be difficult to many people. I am sure it would to me; the terrors of death are evident to our senses, the glories of a future world are unseen, and therefore less easily appreciated."

"But faith is the evidence of things not seen," said I, "and it is the gift of God; we must therefore pray for that faith, which shall overcome all difficulties, and deprive even death of its terrors."

At this moment Mr Taylor entered the room, and asked what made us look "as grave as three crows in conclave. I'll wager you were discussing what should be the colour and cut of Lucy's next new dress."

"Indeed, dear William," said Lucy, "we were speaking on a much graver and higher subject, and one which would, I believe, have interested you, though you sometimes pretend to laugh at these things—we were speaking of the fear of death."

"Nay, let us rather speak of the hope of life," said her brother, affectionately kissing her; "you gave us enough of the fear of death, you little monkey, for a week or two after your drowning."

Lady Taylor entered just then, and the conversation became general. It did not strike me at the time, but I had immediately afterwards occasion to recollect, that whenever Mr Taylor came to see his sister, which he sometimes did twice or three times a-day, Lady Taylor was usually present, remaining in the room until he left it, if she were there when he entered, or coming in immediately after, if she happened to be at the time in any other part of the house. My attention was drawn to the fact a day or two after the conversation I have just related, by the following circumstance:—Adjoining Lucy's

room was a dressing closet, in which ever since her illness a girl had been placed, in order to fetch any thing that might be required, when nurse was beside her young mistress. Now that Lucy was so much better, this girl supplied nurse's place when the latter was absent at her meals. She was sitting sewing as usual in the adjoining room, and the door was open between the two apartments, when Mr Taylor entered in unusually high spirits.

"Always at your post, Miss Mathieson," he said, as he came in; "you should really go out; this close confinement is beginning to make you look pale and thin, and I am sure Lucy would not be so selfish as to wish to detain you."

"Oh no," said Lucy, "I have just been begging Miss Mathieson to go out; however she says she will not till I have had my lunch, and nurse is down stairs at her dinner, but Jane is in the next room, and she can warm up a little beef-tea, and make some toast, as well as nurse. Do, Miss Mathieson, beg her to do so as quickly as possible." Jane, who could easily hear every word, entered the room upon this, and said, "I will do it in a few minutes, Miss, but I must first go and tell my lady that Mr William is with you, as she desired me always to let her know directly."

Mr Taylor got very red, and evidently was much displeased. "You may get what Miss Lucy wants at once, Jane," he said, rising and going towards the door, "I am going to my mother; and so will save you the trouble."

The poor girl looked distressed, "I am sure, sir, I meant no offence, but that was her ladyship's special orders."

Mr Taylor slammed the door after him, and Lucy looked at me with a half-frightened expression. "What can William mean by being so angry, or why did mamma want to know when he came in here, I wonder."

An uneasy presentiment came over me, that somehow or other I was connected with the affair, yet I could not tell how or why; but I felt nervous and uncomfortable, owing, no doubt, greatly to my late anxiety of mind and constant fatigue and watching. I was, therefore, not sorry when Lucy insisted that I should fulfil my promise, and go out for a short walk. I had not been out since the evening of Lucy's accident. The delightful fresh air, the consciousness that Lucy was recovering, the exhilarating feeling of walking again after such close confinement, conspired to make me feel gay, and I walked by the edge of the little stream

which I have mentioned as running near the house, singing snatches of songs and tunes as I went along. I did not go far, but sat down under a large oak, and, lulled by the murmur of the waters, and the hum of insects, fell into a sort of dreamy state, and was building splendid castles in the air, when my reflections, if they can be entitled to the name, were suddenly brought to a close by the sound of hurried footsteps, and turning round, I saw Mr Taylor approaching me with an appearance of haste and excitement that startled me. As he drew nearer, he slackened his pace, and remained standing opposite to me. There was a momentary awkward silence; at last he spoke.

"I have sought you, Miss Mathieson, with the wish of coming to some explanation with you on a subject which has long been very near to my heart, but on which, for the sake of my parents, I have hitherto been silent." He paused for a moment, and I was too much taken by surprise, too much agitated, to venture on a reply.

He sat down beside me. "Miss Mathieson, from the first moment that you entered our house, when I thought I traced in the expression of your face a resemblance to my sister Winnifred, my heart warmed towards you. In vain I struggled against

a love which I knew would be displeasing to my parents; I felt that I could not remain in the house with you, and conceal my regard, and therefore willingly agreed to the plan proposed by my mother for my going abroad, though she imagined that I did not see through her motive for sending me from home. In some measure her plan succeeded. Amidst the distractions and amusements of my changeful life abroad, I did at last succeed in banishing the thought of you, and supposed that I might quite safely come home again. But had I never loved you before, your patient and unwearied kindness to my poor sister in her late illness, must of itself have won my regard. Still I strove to subdue it; but when I find that my actions are watched, and that the very servants are set as spies over me, I would endure such a state of things no longer; I have pride as well as my mother, though perhaps of a different kind, and so I have told her. I am old enough to judge for myself in a matter so nearly concerning my own happiness. Had she acted differently, I might at any rate have consented to see the woman whom they are wanting to force on me; but now I am determined to be no longer trifled with, and from your lips alone will I accept the decision of my fate. You are

silent, dear Miss Mathieson. I fear the abruptness of my avowal has displeased you; speak, I entreat you, the happiness of my life depends on your answer." The suddenness of his proposal certainly took me by surprise; but a response from the very depths of my heart seemed to tell me that, though scarcely conscious of it before, Mr Taylor had won my young heart, and that I truly loved him.

I tried to speak, tried to muster courage to tell him how impossible it was that we could be more to each other than as distant acquaintances, but the half formed words died on my lips, and I could only answer him by sobbing like a child. Let it be remembered that I was very much exhausted in body and mind, by my late anxious watchings. At first he seemed not to know what to make of my agitation; then he made every endeavour to soothe me; and it was such a luxury to listen, though I knew it must be for the last time, that I allowed him for a short time to pour out words of affection, which were treasured afterwards in my inmost heart. At last I felt that I was acting a weak, and even unkind part by remaining silent; so summoning all my resolution, I forced back my tears, and, as calmly as I could, told him that I saw plainly the path of duty which each of us ought to

pursue, and that I was prepared to follow that which lay before me, however it might be strewed with thorns. Every argument which sophistry could invent did he use, to persuade me to change my resolution, but to no avail. I could not and would not become the wife of any man whose parents would refuse to receive me, and thus bring dissension and wretchedness into a family, in which I had received much kindness, notwithstanding Lady Taylor's distant manners.

But though every word which passed at that interview, is graven on my memory, it would be needless to repeat our conversation, as neither of us succeeded in convincing the other. At length we parted; at my request he did not accompany me back to the house, and as he turned to pursue a different path from that which I took, I inwardly resolved that we should never meet again; and, not trusting myself to turn my head, hurried home.

I had been so much longer absent from the house than I supposed possible, that I did not remain longer in my own room than to wash the tell-tale traces of tears from my eyes; and, employing a degree of self-control of which I scarcely believed myself mistress, I sat down beside Lucy, and spoke to her with calmness, and without

betraying the agitation which I felt. She questioned me as to where I had walked, and hoped I had enjoyed the fresh air, and we afterwards spoke of various indifferent subjects, till at length, as I rose to fetch something she had asked for, the light fell full on my face, when with a start she exclaimed, "Miss Mathieson, you are ill—very—you are as pale as death, you are killing yourself by your exertions for me;" and then called to nurse, and begged her to find out what could be the matter. I said there was no cause for alarm, as nurse, on looking at me, seemed to share the fears of her young mistress; but, pleading most truly a severe headache, said that I would go to bed, and try to sleep it off. Once alone in my room, I turned all my thoughts upon what I should do next, feeling, as I did, that it was impossible for me to stay longer at Hanfield.

From Mr Taylor I had learnt that, acting on the impulse of the moment, when the girl had mentioned Lady Taylor's desire to be instantly summoned when her son visited his sister's sick chamber, he had repaired to his mother, and asked why a spy had been set upon his actions. That high words had ensued between them, and that he had at last declared his regard for me, and his

determination, if he gained my consent, to make me his wife; with this avowal he had left his mother's presence, and hastened out in the direction he knew I should probably walk, being aware from Lucy of my intention to go out.

As, therefore, Lady Taylor knew her son's intentions, I felt that it was necessary she should also be made acquainted with mine, and determined on seeking an interview with her the next morning. Meanwhile I reviewed the circumstances in which I was placed, and plainly saw that I had but one course left to pursue, that of instantly resigning my situation, and leaving a house, where, situated as I was, it would have been improper and most painful to have remained.

I passed a night of deep mental conflict and self-examination; and oh, how earnestly I prayed for strength to act aright, and for patience and submission under a trial which had at first seemed greater than I could bear.

A deep calm succeeded at last to the tumult with which my heart had been agitated. A conviction more real than I had ever felt before of the superintending care of my Father in heaven, and of the sympathy of Him "who still retains a fellow-feeling of our pains," shed a quiet peace over my whole

soul, and I felt I had to do with a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God.

Lady Taylor was a late riser, so that it was twelve o'clock of the following morning before I could venture to request an interview with her. I found her in her dressing room, and as I entered, I thought she looked taller and more stately than usual. She was evidently, however, excited, while I felt perfectly composed. My struggle had been with myself, and my own perverse affections; once I had been enabled to obtain the mastery of these, my whole course was comparatively easy.

"I am aware," I began, "of the communication made to you yesterday by your son, and regret most deeply that I should have been the cause of disagreement between Mr Taylor and yourself; but I wish you clearly to understand that you need have no cause to fear that I shall ever enter into your family against your wishes. I think, therefore, after what has occurred, it were better for all parties that I should leave the house at once; Lucy would, at any rate, not have required my services much longer; I only regret that I must leave her before she has entirely recovered."

Lady Taylor had looked very stern as I began to speak, but her countenance softened as I went

on; and when I stopped, she took me kindly by the arm, and led me to a seat (we had been both standing), and said, "You are very pale, I trust you do not feel faint. Your anxious cares and watchings over my poor child have been too much for you. As to this folly of William's," she added, again speaking haughtily, "I am glad to see that your good sense points out the impossibility of a connection with him. He is a foolish, headstrong boy, and I believe is more influenced in this absurd affair by the spirit of contradiction, than by any other sentiment. He knew that we were anxious for him to form a connection which would in every way be suitable and desirable, so he takes a mortal hatred to the young lady whom he has never seen, and falls over head and ears in love with the first pretty face he sees, to show his independence. But when you are gone he will soon forget this folly; and as he has always been a most dutiful son, I do not doubt but that he will in the end accede to our wishes, if the young lady herself gives her consent. Meanwhile, I think you are right in proposing to leave at once, your remaining here could not but be unpleasant to yourself, and might encourage my son in hopes which could never be realised."

Lady Taylor was a strange compound; with a naturally kind disposition, pride and selfishness had nearly choked up her better feelings; and accordingly, except when touched by a momentary recollection of what I had done and suffered for Lucy, her whole address was made in a cold heartless manner, as if she had been speaking to a third and altogether uninterested person. The ease, too, with which she parted with me, struck a deep chill into my heart. I thought I should have shown more regret if I had been parting with the meanest servant, or even a domestic animal, that had been four years an inmate of the house; and when I remembered what Lucy had been on my first arrival, all the care and anxiety she had occasioned me, the improvement she had made, greatly as I knew by my means, I could not but feel hurt at the coolness with which Lady Taylor accepted my proposal to leave, and thought she might have expressed some regret that such a step was necessary.

Our interview ended amicably, however, for which I felt thankful, as I had feared she might have been angry with me, as the unintentional cause of strife between herself and her son; but the cool indifference with which she spoke of an affair which

was to colour my future life, and the impossibility she appeared to think there was of my presuming to return her son's affection, were deeply galling to my feelings, and I hastened to close the interview lest I should be tempted to give way to my naturally hasty temper.

Once more alone, I revolved in my mind how I should acquaint Lucy with my proposed departure, as though some degree of wounded pride, and a consciousness of rectitude had sustained me during my interview with Lady Taylor, I felt myself quite unequal to encounter the scene which, with my knowledge of Lucy's impulsive and impetuous nature, I knew would follow the announcement to her of an arrangement so sudden and unexpected.

I did not feel equal to making this announcement myself, so I summoned nurse to my counsels, merely telling her that circumstances had occurred which would oblige me to go home immediately, and that I felt unequal to the task of telling Lucy that we must part.

While I spoke to nurse, I busied myself unconsciously in gathering together and arranging some of my things as preparatory to packing. I felt a restless uneasiness, and a desire to be doing some-

thing, with a sort of longing to be away, since I must go, that were the effects of a feverish state, both of mind and body. Nurse looked at me with compassionate kindness, and the good creature expressed with such warmth and heartiness her regret at my leaving, that I became at last somewhat more composed. So soothing is sympathy and genuine kindness, no matter what the difference of station between those who give and those who receive it. I think she had suspicions as to the cause of my leaving, as she never even referred to what could occasion so sudden a resolution, and showed her usual tact in the manner in which she strove to comfort me, for she could not but see how wretched I was.

She left me, promising to let me know how Lucy had borne the news she was to communicate to her, but did not return for more than an hour. There were tears in her eyes when she came again into my room.

"Poor Miss Lucy," she said, "is in a sad way, and has been crying ready to break her heart. She was angry at first, and said it was unkind of you to leave her while she was ill, and then she thought perhaps you were ill yourself with watching beside her, or you would never have gone; and again she

cried, and said she must see you, and perhaps she would be able to persuade you to stay; so, as she is more composed now, I think, Miss, you had better go and speak to her yourself."

As I approached the bed where Lucy was lying, she sat up, and, throwing her arms round my neck, said, "You will not, you must not leave me, dear Miss Mathieson; I never knew till now how much I loved you; Oh, indeed I could not do without you. You will stay till I am quite well again, but you must go out every day; you are not well; you have been too closely confined, but you will soon be better; do stay."

"You may be sure, dear Lucy, I would never have left you, till you were quite well, had it not been absolutely necessary for me to do so. I cannot explain to you my reasons for leaving, but they are weighty, or I should too willingly have followed my own inclinations, which would have kept me beside you."

"Then why do you go? If you really like to stay, and know that you are making me happy by doing so, and that you have many opportunities of speaking to me upon subjects which I would scarcely listen to when I was well, surely it is your duty to remain; and I know duty is always the most

powerful argument with you," she said, with something of her usual arch manner.

"But the duty which bids me leave you appears to me still more imperative," I replied; "so I am afraid, dear Lucy, even your argument on that score must fail."

She whispered something just then to nurse, who had entered the room while I was speaking, and whom Lucy had beckoned to her.

I sat beside her, and tried to talk of something else, but both of us soon became silent, and we had sat so for some minutes, when Lady Taylor came into the room.

"Mamma," said Lucy, "I sent for you, to see if you could be more successful than I have been in trying to persuade Miss Mathieson to remain at Hanfield; do you know she is speaking of going away immediately, and what could I do without her?"

"You are no doubt much indebted to Miss Mathieson for her kindness to you during your illness, my love, but if it is her wish to leave, we have no right to attempt to detain her, and you will still have many left to love and care for you."

"But why should she go? We might surely hold out some inducement to make her stay."

"I told you already, dear Lucy," I said, "that I must go, and that I would willingly have staid, if I had not the conscious feeling that my duty required that I should go home, and that as speedily as possible."

She looked from her mother to me with an unsatisfied expression, but Lady Taylor remained cold and impassive, while the agitation which must have showed itself on my countenance was to be accounted for by the pain of our present discussion So finding she could make no impression upon either of us, she burst into tears, and asked when I intended going.

"For both our sakes," I said, "I think I had better leave to-morrow, if possible. Such excitement and distress as this is very bad for you in your still weak state, and I am myself not feeling very well, so that to prolong my stay might be injurious to us both, and could not benefit either."

"Mamma, can you allow this?" asked Lucy, reproachfully; "we have surely sufficient cause of gratitude to Miss Mathieson to do all that is in our power to prevent her leaving us so hastily, particularly when she is evidently unwell."

Lady Taylor seemed annoyed, and made no answer, but I said, "I am well enough, dear Lucy,

and wish to go, but your endeavours to detain me only agitate and distress me; pray say no more on the subject."

Just then I heard Mr Taylor's step in the passage leading to Lucy's room, and I therefore hurried away to my own apartment, through the dressing closet, which communicated with both our rooms.

I begged nurse to come to my assistance, and with a heavy heart began seriously to the business of packing, and when every thing was pretty far advanced, sat down to write to my dear mother, that I should be at home in a few days.

The following day being Friday, I thought I should prefer taking Saturday's steamer, for which I should arrive in London just in time—an arrangement which obviated the necessity of going to my kind friends the Trenchards, whom I felt I would rather avoid under the circumstances, as I should have found it extremely difficult, in the minute details for which conversation affords so many opportunities, to account for my sudden departure from Hanfield, without explaining its precise cause, and upon that subject I could not speak even to Julia.

I was so much occupied, that it was getting dusk

before I could return to Lucy, who seemed flushed and excited. "William is as much annoyed as I am at your leaving so suddenly," she said, "and spoke quite angrily to mamma; he could make nothing of her, though I am sure she likes you too."

"She knows that it is my wish to leave."

"Yes, but there is something mysterious in your going so suddenly, and mamma might at least have asked you to stay."

"I told you, dear Lucy, that I was not at liberty to explain to you my reasons for leaving, but they are urgent, and that your mother knows, or I should at least have waited till you were well. Is it not therefore kinder to let me go, without urging me to that which it is painful for me to refuse. Let us drop this subject, and let the last evening we shall spend together for a very long time, be spent as pleasantly, as, under the circumstances, is possible. Do you recollect what a wild thoughtless thing you were when I first came, and the astonishment you gave to me when I saw you perched like a squirrel at the top of the large chestnut tree, in front of the house; you would willingly have said good bye to your governess then."

"Because I did not know you; but now that I

do know and love you, it is hard, oh, very hard, to part."

"Yes, it is painful, most painful; but, dearest Lucy, do you recollect what nurse said the other day about the loosening of our earthly affections. Perhaps we both needed this trial to teach us the uncertainty of this world's simplest enjoyments. I little thought then, that a trial to me most severe was so near at hand. Let it be another lesson to us to remember that we are but strangers and pilgrims here, and oh, let us indeed, like the patriarch, seek that city whose builder and maker is God. We are both young, but you, dear Lucy, have not, like me, known what sorrow is, or felt its subduing influences. Long, long may you be preserved from severe trials, but strive to take submissively the discipline which your Father is so gently laying on you. Try to remember the mercy which has in your case so recently rejoiced over judgment, and patiently bear the ills, which the same merciful hand which has restored you to life and health, may see it necessary to mingle in your cup, which hitherto has truly overflowed with goodness and mercy."

"I will strive," she answered in a solemn tone. "Yes, you are right, I need discipline. I have been

hitherto so accustomed to have everything my own way, that I was disposed to murmur even against God, if anything happened in His Providence which was disagreeable to me, and over which I had no control. It was but yesterday that I felt inclined to fret when you went out, and thought that it was very hard to be left lying weak and helpless in bed, when others were able to go out and enjoy the pure fresh air, but I knew the thought was very sinful, and struggled against it."

"Continue to struggle, and at the same time earnestly pray for help and wisdom, and in due time you will reap if you faint not." In this manner we continued to talk till a late hour, when we parted for the night, both of us much more composed than I should have supposed possible.

The next morning, as I was finishing my packing, after breakfast I was summoned into Lucy's room to bid farewell to Sir William, who was going to ride over to see a friend at some distance, and thought I should have left before his return. The kind old baronet seemed to feel very much my leaving. I saw by his manner that he was acquainted with all that had occasioned it. He thanked me in his kind and hearty way for all that I had done for Lucy, both before and since her

illness. "You have broken in the young colt," he said, "and now she only wants a little rubbing and polishing to turn out handsomely. Let us hear from you soon, my dear young lady. Your letters will do Lucy good, and remember, that if in any way Lady Taylor or I can forward your views, you may command our services." As he took my hand he pressed something into it. "There was no time to buy anything," he said, "but let me beg you to accept this, and purchase some little remembrance of your troublesome pupil with it." I found, on examining it afterwards, that it was a twenty pound note.

The coach for London left Taunton at four o'clock, and I was to have the carriage to take me thither. I went through the ceremony of sitting down to an early dinner, but it may be supposed that I had no great appetite. I never stirred from my room without the dread of meeting Mr Taylor—a meeting for which I felt myself quite unequal. I saw nothing of him, however.

When I went to say good-bye to his mother, she was kind though stately, and expressed a desire to do what was in her power to assist me in procuring another situation.

Poor Lucy was dreadfully agitated, yet she

seemed to do all she could to control her feelings, and was so affectionate and considerate, that I felt as if I had never known her worth till now. For myself, I went through all my duties, and said adieu to all, like one in a troubled dream. I always seemed to hope that I might awake and find that it had been such.

Agitation and want of my full allowance of rest for many weeks past, and the sudden and exciting events of the last three days, must have caused a sort of dizziness or stupor, for I have but an indistinct recollection of my drive from Hanfield to Taunton. Once arrived there, the necessary exertion of taking my place in the coach, seeing to my luggage, etc., again roused me. It was not till everything had been safely deposited on the coach, and I had taken my seat, that the Hanfield coachman, an honest, kind-hearted Somersetshire man, took leave of me respectfully, and drove away. I strained my eyes after the carriage, and as the wheels disappeared at a turning, I felt that I had seen the last of Hanfield and all that belonged to it; but I was mistaken. The moment the carriage disappeared Mr Taylor stood at the coach door.

"I have in vain tried to see you, Miss Mathie-

were all as yet untenanted, as the elder members of the family did not breakfast till ten o'clock. No traces could I see of Lucy, nor could any of the servants give me an idea of where she might be found. One of them thought he had seen her go into the drawing-room, but it was nearly a quarter of an hour before. I went again into the drawing-room, and noticed, what I had not before observed, that the French window which opened on the lawn was open; I went forward to it, and looked about in all directions for the truant, but could see nothing, and was just about returning into the room, when I thought I heard a suppressed laugh. I again looked out, but could see no one: however, on the sound being repeated somewhat more distinctly, I found that it proceeded from above me, and looking up, discovered Lucy perched very nearly at the top of one of the large chestnuts in front of the house.

Nurse, who had been assisting me in my search, cried out immediately on seeing her. "Oh, Miss Lucy, do come down; you'll catch your death of cold, sitting up there like a crow in a mist: and Miss Mathieson will get cold too, standing there without onything on her head, waiting for you."

"You had better get Miss Mathieson her bonnet

son," he said, "since our interview in the park, but I could not let you go without at least saying good-bye, and asking if it can really be that my folly has driven you from Hanfield. Surely if you could not love me, you might have stayed at Hanfield notwithstanding, and I would have spared you from going by leaving the house myself for a time. But all has been so hurried, that I never knew till last evening, even that you intended leaving."

I scarcely knew how to answer. I felt rather glad that he should suppose—as from his manner he evidently did—that I did not care for him, and feared to speak lest I might betray my real feelings; but at this moment two other passengers took their places in the coach with considerable noise and bustle, so that no further opportunity occurred for private conversation; and when a few minutes after the coachman mounted his box, I shook hands with Mr Taylor, said a hurried good-bye, and we drove away, leaving him standing like one in a dream, while I leant back in the coach, and felt as if the world again lay like a dreary blank before me.

CHAPTER V.

"That is not home where day by day
I wear the weary hours away;
That is not home where lonely night
Prepares us for the toils of light.
'Tis hope, and joy, and memory, give
A home wherein the heart may live."—CONDER.

GLAD as I naturally felt to get home again to see my dear mother, my brothers, and my own sweet Emma, I still experienced a void after coming back to Edinburgh, which I found most painful. I missed the every-day routine to which I had been accustomed, missed Lucy's waywardness and drollery, but more than all, I missed the daily visits of Mr Taylor to Lucy's sick chamber, which, now that I looked back, I found I had enjoyed more than at the time I was myself aware of. This period was to me one of life's rainy seasons, when all seems "cold, and dark, and dreary." My mother was not long in discovering that something was materially wrong. She saw that I was dispirited and lifeless, and

guessed the cause, for I had not been able to bring myself to tell even her all that had passed. I had merely said that many things had made me feel uncomfortable at Hanfield latterly, and that I had availed myself of a disagreement with Lady Taylor to propose to her my leaving, which, as Lucy's education was really completed, she had accepted, and I thought it best to leave at once. I was wrong in not being more open; but while I would not for worlds have deceived my mother, I could not tell her the whole truth; twice I went into her room to do so, but my courage—my very breath—seemed to fail, and I left it again without speaking of that which was uppermost in my mind.

At last, one evening when we were quite alone, the boys spending the evening out, and Emma in bed, my mother herself began the subject by saying, "Do you know, Mary, I have had some strange suspicions as to the real cause of your leaving Hanfield; can it be, my dear child, that you have deceived me, or, I ought rather to say, concealed part of the truth from me?"

My face flushed crimson, and I looked down at my work unable to answer.

"Your look is a sufficient answer, Mary, and I now feel that my fears are too well founded. Could

you really have been so rash, so foolish, as to form an attachment to Mr Taylor?"

"Dear mamma, I am so glad you have yourself spoken on this subject; I had no wish to conceal anything from you, but I could not speak of it first; indeed, I did not know myself that I cared for Mr Taylor till two days before I left Hanfield when he proposed to me."

"Proposed! you have not surely engaged yourself, or in any way encouraged a proposal which you must be aware would be so very much against the wishes of the young man's parents?"

My mother said this more severely than I had almost ever heard her speak before.

"Oh no, my dear mother, I have no desire to enter any family in which I might be looked down upon," I said proudly.

"You have done rightly in refusing him, my love, though I fear that you were actuated more by a feeling of pride than by a sense of duty; but, in either case, if you really liked him, the task must have been a painful and a difficult one, and I feel for you, my poor child, and can now understand what has changed you so much since you came home. George feared you were ill; but I thought from the first that your ailments were rather

mental than physical. You must try to exert yourself more; I do not tell you not to think of Mr Taylor—at present you would perhaps find it impossible to follow such a piece of advice—but this you can do, employ yourself, and give yourself as little time for brooding over your disappointment as possible. Think about what can be done towards procuring another situation, and in the meanwhile assist Emma in preparing her lessons; try to take an interest in your brothers' pursuits; you will find this the best means of banishing a regret which it can only injure you to indulge."

A sting of self reproach shot through me as she spoke. I had been more than a fortnight at home, and I felt that I had done nothing during this time but nurse my own selfish sorrow. I scarcely knew what was going on at home. I had spent the greater part of my time in my own room, or when, with the others, on the plea (a very true one) of not feeling well, had scarcely mingled in the general conversation. I felt how unkindly and selfishly I had acted, and promised my mother that I would do all in my power to shake off the depression in which I had hitherto been indulging; I then relieved my burdened mind by telling her all that had passed between Mr Taylor and

myself, and experienced the soothing, sweet influence of a mother's love and sympathy.

That night I went to bed with a lighter heart, and rose the next day determined to employ myself in such a manner as should leave but little time for the indulgence of melancholy. I determined while I was at home to take the entire charge of Emma's education, and in this occupation, and the constant calls made upon my attention by my brothers, who came to me in all their difficulties and amusements for advice or sympathy, I soon found such full employment as enabled me to bear patiently the trial which I could not banish from my recollection.

Emma was now nine years old, and a perfect sunbeam in the house, always so gay and joyous, so well pleased with everything, and so anxious to please others. My whole thought was how she should be shielded from the corroding cares and vexatious trials, which had made me at twenty-two a staid and thoughtful woman.

George and I had many conversations about her future prospects, but could come to no conclusion, except that we agreed that, if possible, she must never be a governess. She was such a sensitive little thing, we felt she could never

buffet with the world; yet my mother would have thought the same of me at her age; but the back is fitted for its burden, and with all our anxiety for the future of those we love, we can never anticipate how circumstances may act upon the character, so as to bring out traits which we never suspected to exist till called forth.

Meanwhile my own health, which had never been very robust, suffered from my late fatigues, and the disappointment I had sustained. It is true I had regained some degree of cheerfulness; but there was a gnawing pain at my heart—a vain regret—when thinking of the past, that never left me, except when I was actively employed, and which affected my appetite and deprived me of sleep. A medical friend, whom my mother with some anxiety consulted, gave it as his decided opinion, that I ought not for a time at least to attempt taking a new situation; and while disappointed to think that I was unable to assist my mother, I still felt thankful that I could remain for a time in the quiet of my own home. I had not the spirit to go among strangers again; at the same time, in the rapid progress which Emma made in her education under my tuition, I had the satisfaction of feeling that I was not useless; and

so two years passed peacefully, if not very happily by.

One very hot day of July, at the end of that period, I was walking with Emma along Princes Street, where we had been making some purchases, when I was stopped by Mr Russell, the same gentleman whom I have before mentioned as having met on my first arrival at Hanfield.

"Ah, Miss Mathieson," he said in his kind cheerful manner, "I am glad we have met, as I particularly wished to see you, and have to-day procured your address, with the intention of calling on you."

I expressed the pleasure it would give me to introduce him to my mother, when he asked if I were going home at once, as he would in that case accompany me.

He accordingly turned and walked home with us, explaining on the way that he had wished to see me, to propose my going to live for a time with his two daughters, rather in the capacity of a friend than as a governess, as they were now seventeen and eighteen years of age. "You are probably aware," he said, "that they have lately lost their excellent mother. I am very much engaged in my parish (he was a clergyman), and

as neither of my girls are strong, and they are both timid and unused to manage for themselves, I think that they will be much benefited by having a young lady of your cultivation and accomplishments to encourage, and, as it were, accompany them in their reading and studies. In fact they have never forgotten you, having taken a great fancy to you; and this plan was originated by them, while it has received my hearty sanction."

This proposal was exactly suited to my wishes, as the exertion would be but trifling, and the family were not strangers to me, and I gratefully accepted his offer conditionally, that my mother should approve of my doing so, of which I had not, however, any doubt; and accordingly when, on our return home, the plan was proposed to her, she at once thankfully agreed to it, as, besides knowing that I should be kindly cared for, the offer was so advantageous in a pecuniary point of view, that she felt it would have been wrong to refuse it.

As soon as arrangements had been made, Mr Russell began speaking of Hanfield and its inmates, and asked if I had lately heard from Lucy. I replied that I had not had a letter from her for

nearly three months, and was beginning to feel anxious as to the cause of her silence.

"Oh, they are in London at present," he replied, "and are so much engaged with this marriage which is just about to take place, that I suppose they have no time for writing."

"Lucy going to be married!" I exclaimed half laughing; "how strange and droll it seems; I can scarcely fancy that giddy girl a married wife, but I imagine she has become quite sober now; I wonder she never wrote to tell me."

"But, my dear young lady, you are jumping to conclusions rather too soon; I never said that Lucy was to be married; there are other and older members of the family than Lucy. I am surprised, however, that you have not heard of the intended marriage of Mr Taylor to your friend Miss Trenchard; only, to be sure, though every one has seen for a long time past that the connection would be agreeable to the old people, the young ones took more time to make up their minds, and the affair has, I believe, been rather hurriedly got up in the end; however, I understand the marriage is to take place immediately."

I sat staring at him and hearing every word with painful acuteness, but felt unable to speak or

move. I thought I could have borne anything but this.

"Mary, my love, be so good as to fetch me a handkerchief out of my room; you will find one in the lower drawer," said my mother, anxious to make some excuse for sending me out of the room.

I understood her meaning, and rose to go; but after walking unsteadily a few steps across the room, I fell down in a dead faint.

It was long before I recovered consciousness. When I did so, I found my mother sitting beside my bed, on which I had been laid, and Emma at the foot of it, weeping bitterly.

Mr Russell had left, but promised to call the next day and see how I was. He had evidently guessed, my mother said, what had caused me to faint, and had been much distressed at having unwittingly given me so much pain. Next morning I received from Lucy and from Julia the two following letters. Lucy's I shall give first:—

Grosvenor Square, 19th July.

It is some time since I wrote to you, dearest Miss Mathieson, because when we are in London—which by the address on my letter you will see is at present the case—I never find time to sit down,

as I can at dear old Hanfield, and have a regular long pen-and-ink chat with you. Besides, my time has been so taken up for some little time past with wonder and astonishment, that I found none to spare for less exciting employments. Only think, William, who was determined to hate your old friend Miss Trenchard before ever seeing her, and has never since doing so, been willing to allow that she had any good qualities at all, has all of a sudden changed his mind, and is actually going to marry her. He is a very composed matter-of-fact sort of lover, not half so ardent or dying of love as I should like to see a swain of mine; but you know Miss Trenchard is one of those quiet, unsentimental, duty-loving sort of people who do not care for great demonstrations, and I think she loves him; and I am sure I trust they may be happy. I like her very much, and am pleased to think that I shall have her for my sister; but I would have liked *somebody* else a great deal better; and, do you know, I once fancied that there really was some liking between William and that same somebody; but that was probably the childish notion of a girl of fifteen. At any rate, William is actually to become a sober married man on the 30th of this month, and both papa and mamma, but especially the latter, are

delighted with the marriage, which they consider in every way a suitable one. Mamma told me that it had been her darling wish for the last four or five years; but she desired me not to tell William that she had said so. I suppose he is already beginning to feel oppressed with the duties and cares of married life, for he is not in such good spirits as I could have wished to see him; but, indeed, ever since the illness which he had, just when I was recovering from my fall into the water, he has never had the elastic buoyant spirits he used to have. I think, too, poor Godfrey's death, which took place a short time after, affected him very much. . . . .

I may here mention that Godfrey, whom I had scarcely seen while at Hanfield, had been, the greater part of the time that I spent in Somersetshire, on the Continent with his tutor, and had died there very suddenly of inflammation of the lungs.

Julia's letter ran as follows:—

My dear Mary—Good news is a slower traveller than bad, for had any misfortune befallen me, I should have made you acquainted with it immediately; whereas, I have been for about a month past a happy betrothed bride, and yet have allowed

the time to slip away day after day without writing to tell you of news, which, sure as I am of your sympathy in what concerns me, will, I feel convinced, give you pleasure, especially as you know something of the gentleman, and must therefore be aware of his many excellent qualities. After this preface, you will not, I think, be surprised to hear that it is to Mr Taylor that I am engaged, and that I feel a quiet assurance of future happiness in the union with one in every way so estimable and excellent. We have, as you know, been long acquainted with Sir William and Lady Taylor; but by some curious sort of fatality, I never happened to meet with their son till about nine months since, when we all went to spend a few days at Hanfield. Mr Taylor was not at home when we arrived, and I believe was not aware of our being there, when he returned a day or two after. At first I thought him cold and reserved, but from the beginning I found it impossible not to like him, though I do not think the feeling was mutual; indeed at that time I sometimes fancied, though he was always extremely polite, that he almost disliked me. Since the family came to London, however, last May, we have, as you must have seen by my letters, often met, and a mutual esteem has gradually ripened

into a most sincere affection, I believe, on both sides. William is not one who makes much parade of his feelings, but I know that he feels keenly, and can love warmly; his affection for his sister proves this, and I do not fear that he will love his wife less truly. The 30th of this month is the day fixed for our marriage, and I am sure you will not forget me on that day, but will unite your prayers to mine that our union may be blessed. I was most anxious to have asked you to come to London and act as my bridesmaid, but both Lady Taylor and her son seemed to think it would be better not; and as I remembered you told me when you left Hanfield, that you had done so in consequence of some slight difference with Lady Taylor, I thought perhaps you would yourself find it pleasanter to pay me a visit somewhat later, when we are quietly settled down as man and wife. I feel, to tell the truth, somewhat afraid of my stately mother-in-law; but she has been all kindness to me, and really treats me as if I were her own child. With Lucy I am delighted; she retains so much of her old spirit as to make her naïve and pleasant, but is so kind to every one, so gentle and considerate, that she is beloved by all. William has just come to take me for a drive, so I must say good-

bye.—Ever, dearest Mary, your affectionate friend, JULIA.

Even to this day, I cannot recal the feelings of the few weeks following the announcement contained in these letters, without a shudder. I felt a sort of helpless, hopeless, apathy, which all the kindness and sympathy of those around me was unable to dispel. I went through my daily duties, talked quite composedly when spoken to, yet at the close of the day I could not have told what I had been doing, or of what I had been speaking. I never shed a tear or uttered a word of regret, though my mother sometimes purposely introduced the subject, in the hope that I might find relief by speaking of what was weighing me down like a dreadful nightmare; but I spoke of it with a coolness which she could scarcely understand, and which was in fact only the calmness of despair.

I was to have gone up to London with Mr Russell, who left a few days after the visit I have mentioned, when he had proposed my taking a situation in his family; but this arrangement would have brought me to London the very week of the marriage, and I felt I could not have seen Julia's happiness, or encountered Mr Taylor, without betraying feelings in which I must for the future

never dare to indulge. My journey was therefore delayed some weeks, as my mother could scarcely make up her mind to part from me. At last, however, in the end of August, I again left home —my friends hoping that the change of scene, and the necessity of exerting myself, might be beneficial.

An acquaintance who was going to London, accompanied me so far on my journey, and from thence a stage-coach conveyed me to the village of B——, of which Mr Russell was the rector, and which was situated in the county of Kent, about twenty miles from London. As the coach drove to the door of the inn, I saw a little pony phaeton draw up, and I had scarcely time to step out of the coach, when a light active figure sprang from the phaeton, and I found myself in Lucy's arms. This was a real and unexpected pleasure, and roused me more than even the separation from my mother and all at home had done. The parting with them appeared only as another link added to the chain of sorrow which I seemed doomed to drag along, but the appearance of Lucy gave me pleasure —a feeling which had so long been a stranger to my heart; besides that, the very sight of her recalled happier days, and brought back so many associations, that it served to change in some measure the current

of my thoughts. This surprise had been prepared for me by Mr Russell, who had thought it would give me pleasure, and make my introduction into his family more easy.

Lucy was much shocked at my appearance, when she looked more attentively at me. "Why, you are looking wretchedly ill, dear Miss Mathieson; ah, you should never have left Hanfield. The air of Somersetshire was much better for you than that icy north of yours, and I do declare I see one, two, three gray hairs; why, you are getting quite ancient at twenty-four. I know your age, for you were only eighteen when you first came to us, and that is six years ago, last January. How time does fly; I am getting quite old." And so she rattled on till we arrived at the rectory, which was about a quarter of a mile from the village inn, and lay in a sweet retired valley, nestled among trees, behind some of which rose the spire of the village church, which appeared not to be more than a stone's throw from the house. At the porch stood the venerable rector and his two daughters. The former received me with the kindness of a father welcoming home a long absent child. The two latter were timid, but most cordial in their reception of me, and I felt at home from the moment I crossed their threshold.

They showed me at once into my bed-room, and told me that tea should be sent to me, or I could get it in the drawing-room, as I might prefer.

"Oh, come into the drawing-room, there's a dear," said Lucy, coaxingly; and then she answered for me that I should come as soon as I had changed my dress; "and I will be your lady's maid," she added, following me into my room, and then shutting the door, as if meaning to take exclusive possession of me.

"Now I am going to give you a good scolding," she said, "for never answering my last letter, or congratulating us on William's marriage."

I turned my face hastily away from her, and muttered something about having been unwell; as I spoke I caught her eye, as we saw each other reflected on the mirror, and instantly felt sure that she guessed my secret.

She came close to me, put her arm round my waist, and kissed me. "Indeed," she said, "you do not need to tell me that you have been ill; you bear only too marked traces of recent suffering. Dear Miss Mathieson, have you been able to put in practice the lessons you used, with so little success, to try and impress on my mind, of patience and submission in affliction?"

"No, Lucy, I fear I have not, but I have had many trials, which you who are rich, and have never had any responsibilities, could scarcely realize." I wished, by speaking thus, to lead her thoughts away from the suspicions which I saw had been awakened in her mind, but I did not succeed.

"Ah, no doubt, cares of that sort must often be very harassing; but unless in the case of absolutely not knowing how to procure necessary food and clothing, I do not think you are one of those people who would repine at being straitened, or make yourself miserable, because you could not make as great a show as your neighbours. It is something more than all this that has blanched your cheek, and is even touching your hair," she said, affectionately stroking my head. "And now, what would I not give, to be able to offer you some of the comfort and advice which you have so often ministered to me in my little troubles."

"You have already comforted me, Lucy, more than I can express, while you make me feel heartily ashamed of myself for having fostered a repining spirit, under trials, which, though they have certainly been severe, yet I might have known were dealt out to me by the hand of One who doth not willingly afflict. Could we but realize the suffer-

ings of our Elder Brother for us, we should be able to estimate our own light afflictions more truly; but the worst of it is, when we are tried, we look in upon ourselves, where all is dark, instead of looking up to Him in whose light we should see light."

"Now you have got a little flush on your cheek, and are looking almost like your old self once more." said Lucy, again kissing me. "So come away to the drawing-room, for we have all been dying for our tea for the last two hours, but waited your arrival, that we might take it together." She accordingly ushered me into the drawing-room, a sweet room with a bow window, in front of which was a rustic portico, which ran round the house, and up the posts of which were trained all kinds of flowering creepers. A French window on the other side of the room led into a very tastefully laid out lawn and shrubbery, while the last rays of the setting sun shed a golden hue over the whole scene. There was a peacefulness in the aspect of all I looked upon, a kindliness in the manner of the dear old clergyman and his amiable girls, and a warmth of love in Lucy's conduct towards me—all of which seemed like balm poured into my wounded spirit; and before the evening closed, I felt almost cheerful, and could join with sincerity in the senti-

ment uttered by Mr Russell in his short and affectionate address to us at family worship—"That the very thorns which strew our path of life, and make this world a vale of tears, are blessings in disguise, even as the nauseous medicine may restore health, or renovate the strength."

Lucy remained for a fortnight at the rectory after my arrival. She never again, after the first evening, referred to her brother's marriage, and seldom spoke of him or of his wife. She was on all other subjects as frank and open as ever, always lively, and still somewhat restless, but in every other respect so much improved, one could scarcely believe she had ever been the wild unruly creature I had once known her. A day or two after I went to B——, she proposed that as I was not so very venerably old, they should call me by my christian name, and succeeded in carrying her point, though the Miss Russells at first made some demur, fearing I should not like it. I, however, preferred it much, as it really only needed this to make me forget I was not at home.

As soon as Lucy had left, we settled down into a regular routine, and the days passed so swiftly and pleasantly by, we scarcely marked the flight of time. We worked and read, visited the poor,

looked after the school, taught a class in the Sunday school, and endeavoured in every way to assist to the best of our ability in carrying out the schemes of active benevolence, or of piety, which, with unwearied perseverance and affectionate solicitude for the welfare of his charge, Mr Russell from time to time suggested or adopted.

A very pleasant circle of acquaintances, among whom Mr Russell was beloved and venerated as a father, gave many opportunities for social intercourse, so that on looking back to this time, I think I may call it about the happiest I have ever known. I felt a peaceful contentment with my lot, and a thankfulness for the many mercies I had experienced, and if now and then a pang of regret would disturb my heart, I instantly endeavoured to check it, with the thought, that I who had so much to be thankful for, should be the last to murmur. By Mr Russell I was treated as an elder daughter, by his daughters as a much loved sister—and here I spent six years of quiet happiness. Twice during that time I visited home, and two important events occurred at the close of the fourth year of my residence at B——which must be noticed. One was the marriage of Maria Russell, the elder of the two sisters, to a Mr Mordaunt, her father's curate, a

young man of good family, in every way worthy of her. The other event affected me deeply. It was the death of my much-loved friend Julia. I had never seen her since her marriage, though often pressed by her to visit her. She always wrote as if she were perfectly happy in her marriage, and spoke of her husband with warm affection. She died in giving birth to twin girls, having already had a fine little boy about a year after her marriage. During his brief married life, Mr Taylor had lived in a very pretty cottage on the Hanfield property, about two miles distant from the house; but on the death of his wife, he removed with his little ones to his father's house, from which time Lucy's letters were filled with accounts of the children on whom she seemed to dote.

After her sister's marriage, Jane Russell insisted that she needed me more than ever, although Mr and Mrs Mordaunt lived within two hundred yards of the rectory. I knew, however, that my staying with them really was conducive both to Jane's and her father's comfort, and therefore willingly remained in a house where I felt myself so happy, and sometimes hoped that if I were always to depend on my own exertions for support, I might

be permitted to live and die in this quiet retreat, which had been to me a second home.

It was my thirtieth birthday, a cold windy March day. I had received kind proofs that the day was not forgotten by the good old rector and his daughters, and was now waiting the arrival of the postman with letters from home, as I had not heard for a longer time than usual. At last I saw the postman coming through the shrubbery, and opening the French window in the drawing-room, ran out to meet him.

"Here's three for the rector, Miss, and one for Miss Jane, and two newspapers."

"Are there no letters for me?" I said impatiently.

"Dear heart, yes; but I did not know, as you was in a hurry."

"Oh, but I am," I said, laughing, but directly felt rather frightened when I saw a letter from George, with black edges. It was not very deep, however, and then I began to wonder who of our relations could be dead, as I scarcely knew that we had any, both my father and mother having been only children. At last I bethought myself that I should satisfy my curiosity as soon by opening my letter and reading it, as by speculating on the

matter, so I broke the seal and read the following from George:—

My dear Mary—Hurra! say I, for all civil well-behaved old codgers of bachelor cousins, who never do anything to make you care a pin for them while they are alive, but embalm themselves in your memory when they are dead, by leaving you a good fat inheritance. Now, my sedate, proper-behaved sister, I am not quite *daft*, so don't be frightened, but listen to a plain unvarnished tale.

Be it known then to you, that my father had a cousin on the mother's side named Maxwell—a stingy curmudgeon, it would appear, from his cradle. He was an only son, indeed an only child, and succeeded on the death of his father to a fine property, value some four or five thousand pounds a year, in Ayrshire, where for many years past he has lived the life of a hermit, kindly accumulating wealth for his heir, an excellent and most deserving young man, who feels duly grateful to the old gentleman for the few spare thousands he has scraped together, and placed in the bank all ready for his use.

But I must be serious. About a week since, I got a letter from a lawyer, informing me of the

death of Mr Maxwell, who died intestate; and having found out that I was heir-at-law, he begged to congratulate me on my accession to the property, and to request my instructions about the funeral, etc. I of course posted off immediately, and almost sent the old housekeeper into fits with the amount of supper I tucked in on my arrival. Poor wretch! I believe, from her starved appearance, the same quantity would have served her for a week of dinners.

As the old man had kept so completely aloof from all his neighbours during his lifetime, I thought it best that the funeral should be as private as possible, the doctor, lawyer, minister, and two of his nearest neighbours, were all who followed in the mourning coaches.

I stayed two days after the funeral, and was overwhelmed with calls and invitations; the latter I refused, as there were a good many papers to look over, etc. Anything more musty and fusty than the house, you could scarcely conceive. I found in his drawers candle ends, and bits of marriage cake, evidently many years old, and still tied round with what had once been white ribbon. The books in the library were green with mould, no fire having been lighted there, it was clear, since the

death of the laird's father. It was well for the poor old housekeeper that I stayed so short a time—she never could have stood it out another week. The fires I ordered in every room, and the quantity I ate, seemed to her dreadful—and yet I am generally thought rather abstemious—but she evidently considers me a voracious shark, from whose jaws nothing is safe. Even the wine, which had at one time been laid in liberally, but at which the last laird seems to have contented himself with peering through the curtain of cobwebs which surrounded it, even this was not respected; and I am uncertain whether the venerable spiders, or the old housekeeper, were most disgusted at the upstart youngster who ventured to disturb their repose. I left special directions with my mother, and Emma, and the boys, on no account to send you a word of this news, as I was determined it should come to you from myself as your birthday present.

And now, dear Mary, need I add, come home as fast as ever you can. I shall weary till we have you once more among us; and I shall never get on with the accumulated business in which my good fortune has involved me, without your counsel. This is a random, harum scarum letter, as I naturally feel excited with so sudden a turn of

fortune; but I believe I may sincerely say, that my joy is not wholly selfish. I do rejoice to think that our dear mother will again be surrounded with the comforts of which she has so long been deprived; and that you, my own dear sister, will be able to live among us once more. And now, that the cares and responsibilities which have so long harassed you are likely to be removed, I trust you will regain your former cheerfulness, and that we shall yet see you a happy wife. Brothers are not given to pay compliments, but I must say, I think the man who marries you will be well off. Mother intends adding a few lines, so I will say no more.

My mother's addition was as follows:—

George has told you, my darling child, of the unexpected events which have changed our mourning into joy, and at once relieved us of the galling anxieties of poverty, and which enable us to recall you to your home to be our joy and comfort. Oh, may we feel grateful as we ought for the mercies which we are experiencing; and having known how to suffer want, may we learn the still more difficult lesson, how to abound.

George's conduct has been like himself—noble and manly. He bears his sudden elevation with

wonderful moderation; and if he forms any quixotic plans, they are never for himself—but for us. One of his first acts was to settle a handsome annuity on me, and to make over five thousand pounds each, to Emma and you. He is endeavouring to procure a commission in the Scots Greys for Tom; and as William wishes to become a writer like his father, George has promised to pay all expenses, and to set him going. We all long for you to share in our prosperity, as you did so faithfully in our adversity, so I trust you will come home very very soon.

I shall not soon forget the way in which my news were received by Mr Russell and Jane. The kindly sympathy with our prosperity, mingled with the regret at losing me, were flattering and cheering, as both were so evidently sincere. "We shall not attempt to detain you, dear Mary," said Mr Russell, after I had read my letters to them, and had received their congratulations, "but we shall miss you sadly—poor Jane here, especially. You have been indeed as one of us, and will ever retain our love and esteem. We cannot detain you; but I hope, when you have been at home for some time, and had time to see and enjoy

your old friends there, you will some day or other think of the rectory, and weary, as you Scotch people say, to see its inmates, as much as we shall do to see you back again."

Jane was silent, and when I looked at her, I saw the tears chasing each other down her face. "Do not think me selfish, Mary; indeed I rejoice at the good news for your sake, and for all your family; but it will be dreadful to part with you; I had begun almost to feel as if we had a right to you."

"A right to my warmest and most grateful love, and to my services, if ever I can render you any," I said, "you have indeed, at present, however, my place is clearly at home, but I hope we shall see each other often—very often."

That night, when alone in my room, I could not help being struck with the contrast in the circumstances which had led to my leaving my two situations both on so short a notice; and such is the perversity of our nature, I could not feel sure but that I had, as far as my own personal feelings were concerned, been rather happier on the former occasion than now. Of course I rejoiced at the circumstance which had raised my family to affluence, and given them a position in society; but for myself I had become in a measure

indifferent to outward advantages; the buoyancy of my natural disposition had fled. I recollected that when I left Hanfield, distressed as I was at all that had taken place, a secret feeling of hope, which I would not even confess to myself, had sustained and even cheered me. This feeling had never left me till the day I heard of Mr Taylor's marriage; from that day I had altogether changed. A sort of hopeless despondency took possession of me, and influenced me more than either others or I myself were aware of. For this state of mind, the life of peaceful serenity, and at the same time of active duty and benevolence, which I had lately led, was especially well suited, and now I almost feared lest I might prove a clog on the happiness of those at home, as being unable to share it with them.

> "My heart still clung to the mouldering past,
> While the hopes of youth fell thick in the blast."

But I determined to struggle against these feelings as selfish, and to endeavour more and more to cultivate that truest of happiness, which is found in making others happy.

A railway had been opened by this time between London and Carlisle, so, as I was a wretched sailor, I determined to adopt this mode

of conveyance, and take the coach from Carlisle to Edinburgh.

With much regret and many tokens of love and kindness from its excellent inmates, I left the rectory of B——. I visited Mrs Trenchard before leaving London. Indeed I had often been in the habit of going to see her, and had met with much kindness from her and her husband. On this occasion, as I entered the house, a little boy ran against me in pursuit of a ball, and nearly tumbled me over. He followed me shyly into the drawing-room, where Mrs Trenchard met me with her usual cordiality, though she had, since her daughter's death, become much older looking. "Ah," she said, "I am glad you have come in time to see my little darlings, as they are to leave to-morrow."

"This, then," I said, "is the child of Mr Taylor and my dear Julia?" I stooped to kiss him, and we were soon the best of friends. The twins were then brought in, sweet little fat roll-abouts, just two years old, looking at me with their large inquisitive blue eyes, and then, as if satisfied with their close inspection of me, condescendingly vouchsafing the kiss I had asked for.

Mrs Trenchard begged me to stay all night, as I should then have an opportunity of seeing both

her husband and Mr Taylor, but I excused myself, as I intended going on to Carlisle by the night train.

It was pretty late the following evening when the Carlisle coach drove up to its destination in Princes Street; and, waiting at the door of the office, I soon discovered my brothers, who rushed forward to welcome me; and before we had arrived at the handsome lodgings in George Street, to which the family had removed, I was overwhelmed with news and questions. I found my mother and Emma both waiting impatiently for my arrival, and both looking so well and happy, that I soon became infected with the general hilarity, and discovered to my surprise that I too could feel almost cheerful.

The change in our circumstances, it will easily be believed, brought us to the recollection of many, who had for some years past wondered what could have become of us. We were overwhelmed with calls from old and new friends, and with invitations to dinner and evening parties. To the young people, all this was agreeable enough for a while, though to my mother, from her delicate health, and to me, from the want of elasticity of spirits, it was very tiresome. I had a good excuse for remaining at home, to keep my mother company, of which I generally availed myself. At last,

towards the end of April, it was agreed by all, that a short time spent in the country would be greatly preferable to the unsettled life we were leading; and we therefore packed up bag and baggage, and started for Mill-holm, the property of which George had so unexpectedly become the possessor.

We were all, not excepting myself, in great spirits. The day was clear and balmy, with now and then a few drops of rain, just enough to remind us that we had not quite done with the tearful month. Arrived at the station we found George, who had gone some days before, to get things a little in order, waiting for us with a hired chaise, which was to convey us to our destination. Emma was in raptures with everything; poor dear, she had seen so little of the country, it was delightful to witness her enjoyment. "How much farther have we to go? Is that the house?" were exclamations made at every turn of the road, or whenever any erection of stone and lime bigger than a cow-house made its appearance. Then, when a nearer examination showed perhaps some miserable cottage, or wayside inn, she would laugh heartily at her own stupidity, only to commit one as great the next minute. At last, between two time-worn pillars of stone, overgrown with moss and ivy, we drove up a neglected avenue;

the grass grew undisturbedly on the road; here and there we saw the remains of what had once been a fence or palisade, partly broken down, partly rotted by time or exposure to the weather; and by the gaunt dilapidated appearance of all we saw, we knew we were approaching the miser's dwelling. George pointed out intended improvements and alterations as we drove along, in all of which Emma took the deepest interest, making suggestions of her own, as they occurred to her, some of them sufficiently impracticable. We found the pinched half-starved looking housekeeper at the door, waiting to receive us, and evidently in some trepidation as to the ways and means of providing for such an invasion of hungry-looking people for any length of time. George, however, informed us that her ideas were becoming greatly enlarged, and that she had actually proposed of her own accord to boil part of a ham which had been a sort of heir-loom in the kitchen from time immemorial; and had been infinitely disgusted with an active young cook, who had been sent out from Edinburgh to assist in making preparations for our arrival, and who had summarily pronounced the ham as past service, in corroboration of which fact she had begged Mr George just to smell it,

for which purpose he would not require to come farther than the kitchen door. An enterprising housemaid from the neighbouring village had also given great offence, by the desperate efforts she had made to polish the furniture, which, all unused to such rough handling, had suffered sad mutilation in her hands—an arm of a chair here, or a leg of a table there, having come off, as she afterwards assured us, when she was doing scarcely anything but looking at them. Notwithstanding all this, however, and the alarming caution which George and Emma invariably used before sitting down, after the housemaid's account of the breakage of the furniture, and after Tom had sprawled with his heels in the air in consequence of throwing himself with some vehemence into a rickety arm-chair, which gave way bodily, placing him in the above rather inelegant position—notwithstanding all this, the old place, when lighted up with bright blazing fires, and happy faces, wore a very pleasant and even cheerful look. Every thing seemed so quaint and old fashioned, we could have furnished an old curiosity shop, and scarcely missed its contents. But though all this was pleasant enough in the merry month of May, which happened that year to be unusually mild, and would

ontinue to be so during the summer months, still ve were obliged reluctantly to confess that some- hing must be done to make the place habitable or a winter residence; and as the whole house re- uired papering and painting, besides some exten- ive alterations which George was anxious to get nade, we found that it would be absolutely necessary o leave it to the tender mercies of masons, carpen- ers, and painters. A council was accordingly held us to how we should dispose of ourselves during the welve or fifteen months, which would elapse before he place could be quite ready for our reception, us it was George's earnest wish that we should emain with him at any rate till he got a wife.

Various plans were proposed. Emma, being he youngest, was desired to give her opinion first. She thought we should take a cottage near, and superintend the alterations. William said he would hear what all had to say, and decide on the plan he thought best. Tom was for a season in London, and shootings in the Highlands. George said that if watched water never boiled, he was sure a house, under the constant influence of so many eyes, never could get finished; and as to Tom's plan, he had inherited some of the prudence, as well as the pro- perty, of the late laird, and should leave London

seasons and Highland shootings to others, but he had a plan of his own, which he would rather propound when my mother and I had spoken. "You forget, George," said my mother, smiling, "that I am in the secret of your plan, and as I think it was partly my own, we must make it a joint-stock concern." As I had formed no plan, George was called on to explain his, which was, that as I had some time since been strongly recommended to try some of the German watering places, my health being still very delicate, George, Emma, and I, should make a pilgrimage to some of the spas, pass the winter either in Germany or Italy, and come back by Paris, while my mother, who did not feel equal to travelling, would remain in Edinburgh with William, who must prosecute his studies, and Tom, who would soon have to join his regiment. This proposal was received with acclamation by Emma, and with much pleasure by myself. The idea of foreign travel had long been a sort of day dream with me, and now that it was about to be realised, was welcomed with delight. Emma and I occupied the same bed, but that night we had so much to talk about this delightful plan, that the sun was shining brightly before we thought of closing our eyes to sleep.

CHAPTER VI.

LETTERS.

For the events and impressions of our foreign travel, I shall refer to the letters written by the various members of our party, of which I have since obtained possession, as they will give a much fresher and more graphic idea of what we saw, and how we saw it, than I could do by merely recalling, at this distant time, the feelings which have so long since passed away. I shall give them in the order of their dates, and they will tell their own story. I pass over our journey to London, and a flying visit which we paid to the Russells, and begin with a letter from George to my mother. It is dated Antwerp, June 15, 184–.

Here we are, dear mother, thankful to know that we are on *terra firma*, though sometimes entertaining some doubts on the subject, from the continued rocking motion we still feel. Oh, the horrors from which we have escaped! and then the

dreadful thought, how are we ever to get back again! But I will not give way to gloomy anticipations, but try and hope for the best: who knows but that, before we recross the dividing barrier, some blessed individual may have perfected the invention we have heard of for shooting people over from Dover to Calais, through a sort of magnified pop-gun.

At any rate we are safe and sound, and, except Mary, who is still squeamish, no otherwise damaged by our recent sufferings, than in having got the most appalling appetites, to the great consternation of the waiters, who, I do believe, fancy that Emma and I carry about double stomachs like the opossum, and take care to cram both.

We got into the "lazy Scheldt" early this morning, and had plenty of time before arriving, to gather ourselves and our goods together, which, as long as we were on the open sea, was a moral impossibility. When we got near the town, the custom house officers boarded us, and began their examinations. They dealt very mildly with us, only they longed to have a grab at Mary and Emma's plaids which they had over their arms, and which they thought were quite new. They took our word for it, however, that they were not, and then

turned to an old French woman, evidently an experienced hand at bullying the officers. She went at it most vociferously, while Emma and I were convulsed with laughter, the scene being all the more amusing to us that we did not understand one word in ten of what they were saying to each other. Soon the ship was fastened to the pier. We forgot the custom-house officers, old woman, and all, and hastened to set our feet for the first time on foreign ground. What a jabberation met us there; but Mary and Emma stood like she-dragons, guarding the baggage, while I called a cab, shaking my head as fiercely as I could, and answering indiscriminately *non non* to every thing that was addressed to me. Emma has just been peeping over my shoulder, and says, "that to do justice to my pronunciation of the word, I ought to have spelt it with a *g*, but that is a libel. We got two bed-rooms next to each other—mine a single, theirs a double bedded room; and as no one thinks here of having a sitting room when travelling, my bedroom has been converted into one, and I am worried out of my life with that monkey Emma, who never gives me a moment's peace, and is just now shaking the table, and jogging my elbow to that degree, that if I had not the patience of Job,

I should give up writing, and banish her the premises. We all went to bed for an hour or so after arriving, and then got a good wash. No one knows the luxury of that, who has not been thirty-six hours or more at sea. Emma and I afterwards descended to the table d'hôte ; poor Mary was really very unwell, so we persuaded her to go to bed again, instead of coming down with us, as she was prepared to do. She was suffering from one of her sick headachs, increased doubtless by the misery of sea sickness. We had some very pleasant people at dinner, which was a splendid one, admirably served and waited. One old Belgian seemed a regular famous fellow, and we talked together most amicably and delightfully, though, I am sure, for my part, I did not understand a word he said (he deluded himself with the idea that he was speaking English), and I am pretty sure he understood me as little. Emma occasionally caught a distant notion of what he was saying, but when she put in her word to make a reply, it only seemed to make confusion doubly confounded, as I was sure to find that I was altogether on another tack. They are serious affairs these table d'hôte dinners, and a mortal hour and a-half did we sit, I am ashamed to say, busily eating all the time. Every-

thing, however, will come to an end, and so did the dinner at last; and after paying poor Mary a visit, who had had nothing but a cup of tea, Emma and I sallied forth to view the town. We were lucky; it was market day, and there were the country women with their pretty white caps, high crowned, and close round the face, looking so thoroughly strange and new, that we began to realise that we had got among the *Furriners*.

I flattered myself that, with Emma, we should have no difficulty in asking questions, but either she was timid, or really has forgotten her French; at any rate she made no hand of it. We meant, however, to visit the cathedral, and as its beautiful spire is everywhere visible, and at any rate was close to the hotel, we soon found our way there, ascended its lofty tower, and were rewarded by a glorious view of the surrounding country, which, flat as it is, yet bathed in sunshine, with the brilliant blue sky above, and transparent atmosphere which we islanders so seldom enjoy, looked very lovely. As we wished to see the principal sights with Mary, we contented ourselves with this exploit of mounting to the top of the steeple, and, except that we could not resist the temptation of just taking a peep at Rubens' magnificent "Descent from the

Cross," we did nothing more in the way of sight-seeing, but strolled about the town, never tired of looking at all that was so strange to us. At last, ample as it was, our dinner managed to digest itself, and we bethought ourselves that it might be tea-time; what was our consternation to find, on looking at our watches, that it was half-past seven.

"Poor Mary will be quite uneasy," said Emma, and we hurried our pace; but where were we going, became the next important question. As neither of us knew, I made up to a decent looking elderly man—"Hôtel St. Antoine, si vous plait." The old gentleman stared at me as if I had taken him for the hotel; then he smiled, said something about Anglais, and gave us a host of directions, of which neither of us understood a word, as he spoke frightfully fast. I managed to catch the first word, *gauche*, and listened to no more, but, following the direction in which he pointed, took the first turn to the left, when we again enacted the same pantomime; and so at last, by dint of extemporising a living sign post at the corner of every street, we found our way to the inn, to the great relief of Mary, who had really been feeling anxious. She was much better, however, and could take tea with us with some relish, and listened to Emma's vivid

account of all we had seen and done, with her usual interest in all that interests others.

Poor dear, I do hope this journey may do her good, and that we may bring her back to you rosy and cheerful, as in days of yore. This is an awfully long screed, dear mother; but I know you will feel interested in all we have been doing. Best love from all to yourself and the boys.—Ever your affectionate son, G. MATHIESON MAXWELL.

I have omitted to mention that George had been obliged to take this name with the property.

FROM EMMA TO TOM.

Brussels, June 20th.

My Dear Tom—Do not be expecting long letters from me, I beg of you, for I assure you we have but little time for writing. Every spare moment we have being occupied, Murray in hand, sight-seeing; and when we get to our hotel, we are either ravenously hungry, or dead tired, or both, and only think of attending to our animal wants. For what we have been doing these last two days, consult the said Murray, and you will have an excellent outline; a few details of our personal experiences, however, I must fill in, to make the picture complete.

George told you of a nice old Belgian we met with at the table d'hôte the day we arrived at Antwerp. We got on famously with him in a sort of patch-work conversation of broken English on his side, and excruciating French from George and myself; but when Mary joined the party the following day, and began talking French fluently to him, I had no idea our sober sister was so up to it (I ought to have said *au fait*), you would have been amused at the effect on our Belgian. He became quite inspired, talked, shrugged his shoulders, and I am convinced fell in love with Mary; at any rate he was most attentive to us, showed us all over the town, got us into private picture galleries, and proved a most efficient cicerone; and really, after the first day, I began to understand what he was saying, and, before we parted, could manage also to make myself understood. At first, when I heard them all speaking French, I had some sort of dreamy idea that I was transformed into Calypso or Telemachus (I never fancied myself Mentor), but somehow all my ideas of French were mixed up with dim recollections of these good folks, whose long prosy speeches I used to read with such weariness to the flesh. Our parting with the Belgian was quite affecting, but we soon recovered the shock, and were able to

amuse ourselves with watching the different people who came or went out of our railway carriage. We travelled second class, but don't be shocked, almost every one does so here, and we want to see men and manners, as well as the countries we travel through. A most comfortable carriage we had, cushioned and stuffed like first class carriages at home; the seats were arranged down the sides, and, at the ends, two seats were placed cross-ways. In the middle was a guard standing by a brass pedestal; I do not know what it was for, but he looked as if he might be steering the train. This functionary examined the tickets as we entered, and took them from us before we left the carriage. We were astonished at the number of catholic priests, and sisters of charity, who seemed to be travelling; we saw several at the various stations, and had five in the carriage with us—three priests, one, by his appearance, a Jesuit, I was sure; he never looked straight at us, but I felt that, with his apparently downcast eyes, he was looking through me. I really got quite nervous sitting opposite to him, and managed to change my place. There were also two ladies with long black cloth dresses, a sort of white bib, and long piece of white muslin fastened in some way to the head,

so as to sit quite square across the forehead, and hanging down at the sides. One of them was very pleasant-looking, and spoke a good deal to Mary, and occasionally to me, but every now and then she opened a prayer-book she carried, and muttered through a prayer, though not loud enough for us to hear the words. The other was rather a vinegar-looking old lady, who continued the whole time vigorously telling her beads, and pattering through her prayers as if she had been quite alone. We had also an English family—a papa, mamma, and hopeful son, evidently considered a prodigy, about nine years old. He talked and fidgetted incessantly, and trod on all our toes, to the evident disgust of a fat, comfortable-looking priest, who was gouty, I suspect, from the way he gathered up his legs whenever the child moved his position to one nearer him. One of the stations between Antwerp and Brussels is Malines, and for my edification, George turned to me when the guard cried out "Malines," and said that's Mechlin. "Mamma, what's a Mechlin?" asked our young traveller. "Very fine lace, my dear," said George, demurely. The mamma glanced at him to see if he were making fun of her prodigy; but George looked so stolid, she evidently was puzzled, and, as the young

gentleman was satisfied with the explanation, the subject dropped there. We were only two hours or a little more between Antwerp and Brussels, though I have made such a long history of our journey by the way.

We are delighted with Brussels, the streets of which we have been perambulating for the last four hours. To-morrow we shall get a guide, and see it systematically. The shops are splendid, and the higher parts of the town beautifully laid out in handsome streets and parks; but I think we were most delighted with the market—the collection of so many lovely flowers and fine fruits in one place, arranged with such taste, as somehow is never displayed by us at home, struck us forcibly. In fact, everything is delightful; but we often wish that our dear mother, William, and you, were here to share our enjoyment.

"To-morrow we visit the show places in Brussels, and the day after go to Waterloo. Sunday, we shall remain here, and proceed on Monday to Cologne, at which place I hope we shall find letters addressed to us, Poste Restante, for we are longing to hear from home. Best love to dearest mamma, Willie, and yourself, from your ever affectionate sister, EMMA.

FROM GEORGE TO OUR MOTHER.

Cologne, June 21st.

We have received your welcome letters, dearest mother, to-day, and were rejoiced to hear that you were all well, and that Tom had got his commission at last. I can fancy the flutter he will be in to have everything in his outfit quite orthodox, and beg that nothing necessary may be spared. Emma longs to see him in his uniform, which she is sure will be very becoming. You see we have arrived in this queer old-fashioned town, and will easily imagine how busy we have been all day sight-seeing. The particulars of the places we see we have agreed we would not give, as these have been so often and well described, that it would only be wearisome to you to read our common-place remarks upon them; but I must tell you of the wonderful impression which the first sight of the glorious Rhine and of the cathedral made upon our minds. With the former there was so much of old historical and poetical association, mingled with our admiration of its actual beauty, that it was difficult to know where the one ended and the other began. With the cathedral, it was different. After York and Westminster, I did not think there could be so very much more to admire, and was therefore not

prepared for the powerful effect produced on us by the view of the cathedral, as we stood in the choir, the only part of the building quite completed. The exquisite proportions, the richly stained glass, the grandeur of the lofty arches, were all things that I had never dreamed of, and I felt like one entranced; and on comparing notes I found that we had all been similarly affected. I am glad to say that both Emma and I think that our sober sister, as Emma has dubbed Mary, is looking more cheerful and better than we have seen her do for years. To-day she had a sort of adventure, which has caused us no small amusement, though really it might have proved rather a serious affair. Two days since, we fell in at Aix with an old chum of mine at the High School, a wild young Irishman called O'Mara, whom you will perhaps remember. He is become quite a handsome fellow, and stands at least six feet in his stockings. He found out, by the book kept at the hotel for the names of the inmates, who we were, and having his full share of modest Irish assurance, was not long in renewing our old acquaintance, and has fairly tacked himself to us. He is really a good humoured fellow, so that we find him a pleasant addition to our party,

though at first I felt somewhat uneasy about it, in my responsible situation of guardian to two pretty women—one of them so very young too. I soon saw, however, that he was not at all a person to take Emma's fancy, who is quite contented to laugh at his jokes, and then forget them; but we have both been not a little entertained at noticing a decided *penchant* on his part for our sober sister, whom he follows about most assiduously, gallantly pointing out all that is worth seeing, helping her over gutters, etc., while she looks so unconscious and innocent of all his attentions, that it is quite refreshing. All this is a prelude to my story. To-day, when we had seen the shrine of the three wise men of the east, and duly admired it and all the real beauties of the cathedral, we were preparing to leave it, when Mary stopped to look at a picture hanging just at the side of one of the numerous confessionals which are to be found in all the catholic churches here. The door of the confessional was standing open, and it seems the temptation for a frolic was more than O'Mara could resist, for, coming up beside Mary, he gently pushed her into the confessional, and shut the door behind her. The whole was the work of an instant, so that she never had time for resistance,

till she found herself shut up in a sort of sentry-box, looking through a grating at a very pleasant, intelligent priest. At first, she was speechless with surprise and vexation, but, summoning her presence of mind, she explained that she had not come there of her own free will. "It was an ill-judged joke," said the old priest, gravely; "never make a mock of religious observances, which, though strange—it may be, absurd—to you, are yet held sacred by others." Mary assured him that nothing had been further from her thoughts, and explained that it had been the act of a thoughtless young man, who was almost a stranger to her. They parted the best of friends, but some priests would not have taken the matter so quietly. Meanwhile, Emma and I had left the cathedral, not knowing what had occurred. Finding Mary was not following us, we turned back again to look for her, and met O'Mara, chuckling with delight at the success of his joke. "Where is my sister?" I asked. "In the confessional," he answered, coolly, pointing to the one in which he had enclosed her, and at the same moment the door opened, and, to our utter astonishment, out she walked, looking so demure, we could not imagine what it all meant.

"Seeing is believing," said O'Mara; but the mystery was soon explained when she came up to us, and read him a lecture he will not forget in a hurry. I don't think I ever saw our sober sister in anything so like a passion before. O'Mara tried to joke it off, but finding that Mary was really angry, he seemed so sorry to have offended her, that she soon forgave him, and it has been a capital joke for us since; but we do not let him know that we laugh at it, as such tricks might, if repeated, lead us into most unpleasant scrapes. Mary says, that as she wrote you a long letter from Aix, she will not write to you at this time, but will probably write to William from Frankfort, which is the next place where we intend making a halt.

FROM MARY TO WILLIAM.

Frankfort, June 184–.

My Dear William—I needed not your most welcome letter to assure me of the interest you take in our movements, and I am glad you have got Murray's guide book, as you can now follow us in imagination through every street, and into every church, see the ruins, or the castles, as we sail

past them up the Rhine, and, in fact, if your imagination be only vivid enough, you will be almost as well off dreaming of the places we are to see as we are in seeing them. We had delightful weather the three days we were on the Rhine, between Cologne and Mayence, and were able to enjoy the beauty of the scenery, which, however, to our Scotch eyes, seemed somewhat tame, but I never tired of looking at the magnificent river. We have, as I believe George told you, an addition to our party, in the shape of a harum scarum young Irishman, who, as he was travelling alone, seems quite glad to have fallen in with a party to whom he can attach himself, as he has no knowledge either of French or German. The dinners afford him a fruitful source of fun and joking. He had heard somewhere that one needs to stand on their heads to digest a German dinner, and wishes he were Quilp's boy in the Old Curiosity Shop, that he might have been trained to that mode of digestion betimes. Yesterday, on board the steamer, fish was handed to us, after soup, boiled beef, several made dishes, and vegetables, had gone round. Mr O'Mara helped himself to some fish, and as it was rather dry, seeing a sauce-boat, containing what he imagined to be butter, standing just before him, he

helped himself liberally, while the waiter poured forth a volley of German which was completely lost on him; but just as he had got a quantity fairly into his mouth, a comfortable-looking German lady opposite to him, and who had made apoplectic efforts to suppress a laugh, said, "Sare, you vas take puddin sauce vith your fish." It was, as I afterwards found, a most excellent custard, but its merits as a fish sauce are doubtful from the spluttering made by Mr O'Mara. George and Emma are in the highest health and spirits, and I myself am often surprised at the feeling of cheerfulness and elasticity, to which I have so long been a stranger. All the party have gone out to take a stroll through the town, and I avail myself of the quiet thus afforded to write to you. I felt a little anxious when Mr O'Mara first joined us, that he might take a fancy to Emma, whose bonny face attracts many eyes; but I am glad to see that she, at any rate, has no fancy for him, and as far as I can discover, I do not think he cares for her further than as a pretty merry girl, who appreciates his nonsense. But he is certainly not the man I could wish for my Emma . . . . .

FROM GEORGE TO HIS MOTHER.

Homburg, July.

We have been here for some days, and are enjoying ourselves extremely. This is the gayest place I ever saw, which, to be sure, is not saying much, as I have lived hitherto so quietly in Edinburgh; but the gaiety of the scene quite surpasses my expectations, and keeps our Emma in a perfect flutter of delight. All is so new and so different to everything we have ever seen before. This is just the beginning of the gay season here, and every day adds to the number of visitors who are pouring in from all parts, though I think the majority are English. But you will have a better idea of what we are doing, if I give you a description of one day's proceedings, so I will go through what we have done to-day as a specimen. We rose at six! only think, and proceeded to the wells, where Mary took the dose of water prescribed to her, and between each glass we promenaded up and down an alley of lime and poplar trees, which runs between the different mineral wells. A brass band, playing exquisitely, was in waiting, and several hundreds of elegantly dressed ladies and gentlemen gave to the whole scene a gaiety for

which, at so early an hour of the morning, I had not been prepared. A vast amount of flirting seemed to go on, and I congratulated myself that my sisters were not likely to make such fools of themselves as some of the girls I saw. O'Mara was with us, and, as usual, desperately attentive to Mary, whose perfect simplicity in the matter amuses me. I once fancied she had been disappointed in love; but I begin to think she is quite above all such weaknesses, or she would be better acquainted with the symptoms. Yet neither Emma nor I have courage to quiz her about him. We once tried some joke of the sort about her Belgian friend at Antwerp, but she looked so sad when we did it, that we have agreed never to do it again. Yet it does seem very strange, so pretty as she was, and still is, and so amiable as we know her to be, that she should be still unmarried. This, however, is by the way. To return. O'Mara, who has been here before, and knows all the notables either by sight or personally, was able to name many of the gay loungers who passed and repassed us. That was the Marquis of ——, another the Duchess of ——. Marquises and marchionesses, earls and countesses, lords and ladies, seemed the rule rather than the exceptions. Then there were

many others distinguished for talent or wealth, whose names have been as byewords ever since we could remember. We came home a little tired, for the wells are a good half mile from the hotel where we are staying, and we had been walking up and down for an hour and a half. A hearty breakfast, however, soon restored us, and we went immediately afterwards to see the castle. A curious old German building it is, not nearly so fine as many of the residences of our nobility; yet it is a royal residence, that is, the owner is a landgrave, or free and independent prince. The former landgrave was married to the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of George III., and this princess has done much towards improving and beautifying the grounds surrounding the castle. About half a mile distant is a sweet little cottage, called the dairy, built quite in the English style, with a rustic porch and verandah covered with creepers, and small latticed windows. Here the princess used to retire on warm days, and sit and work, or write or read. It is now shut up; but the pleasant garden in which it is situated is open to the public, and there are seats and tables placed under all the large trees, where persons of all classes are to be seen in the evening drinking coffee, or tea, or soda

water, which are supplied by the tenants of a cottage close by. There was a melancholy feeling in looking through the room occupied principally by this princess in the old castle. It was as she had left it. There were pictures of her good old father, and of most of her brothers and sisters. The room itself was furnished in the English style, as it prevailed some forty or fifty years since, that is, cold and stiff. Her work-box, and the chairs which she had embroidered, all looked so desolate, as no longer possessing an interest for any one there. We could not help picturing to ourselves what her feelings must have been on first entering her new abode. The town then being little more than a small dirty hamlet, and her window commanding a view of the greater part of her husband's principality.

The view, however, is really beautiful. An avenue of splendid old poplars leads as straight as an arrow to a hunting lodge nearly three miles distant. This lodge lies at the foot of the Taunus mountains, which bound the landscape, and form a very fine range—in some parts covered with trees to the summits, in others rising rocky and bare, while some are clothed with green pasture. These Taunus hills seem to be but one vast laboratory

of nature, who puzzles herself to vary in the most ingenious manner the quality of the waters she sends forth so abundantly from this her workshop. At Homburg there are four or five wells of entirely different properties within a quarter of a mile of each other. After seeing all this and a great deal more—seeing nearly the whole of the army of Hesse Homburg turn out, consisting of two or three hundred men, and looking at some lodgings to be let by the prime minister or some such important functionary, we returned to our hotel, dressed, rested, and went to the table d'hôte at five.

There are some very stylish people to be met with there, and as all seem disposed to be pleasant, we got into conversation with those immediately beside or opposite to us. Among the latter were an English baronet with a very pretty daughter, a French nobleman with a little wife, full of airs and affectation, but very agreeable withal, interlarding her broken English with little French shrugs and exclamations, and making herself very entertaining. Next to me was a young Bavarian officer, a most agreeable, gentlemanly man, who spoke English well, and seemed to have a great admiration of the English language and character.

After dinner, we strolled into what are called the Kursaal gardens, which are very near our hotel. There the company we had seen in the morning were again assembled, but more splendidly attired, and the same band was in attendance, discoursing most delightful music. The gardens are tastefully laid out, and planted with beautiful flowers, and flowering shrubs; altogether it seemed a sort of fairy land, and the gay laughter, and merry talk that floated through the air in the intervals of the music, the bright dresses and brighter faces that passed and repassed, made one forget that all this luxury, these beautiful gardens, that thrilling music, were solely supported by the vice or folly of the hundreds, who, tempted by these allurements into the vortex of dissipation, sought to mend or make their fortunes at the gambling table. The wells, the band, the gardens, the news-room, all are gratuitous, and yet the owner of the establishment is wealthy almost beyond belief . . . .

FROM EMMA TO HER MOTHER.

Homburg, July.

We have now been in this land of enchantment for three weeks, my dearest mother, and it scarcely

seems three days, we have been so much amused at the novelty of all around us.

But do not think, though we are enjoying everything so thoroughly, that we shall be discontented with our own dear home, when we come back again. Oh, no, I assure you, even in the midst of all the stir and bustle with which we are here surrounded, we often say that we should soon get tired of such an existence, and that we shall enjoy our snug old home all the more for having left it; and then when we draw round the fire on a winter evening, how pleasant it will be to live over the present time again, and recall the agreeable or odd acquaintances we have made, or adventures with which we have met.

I think, from what you said in your last letter, you will not be sorry to hear that Mr O'Mara has left for Baden-Baden. George and I strongly suspect that Mary gave him a "basket," as the Germans call a refusal, but she is so prudent, we make nothing of these matters out of our sober sister. Shortly after we came here, we went all through the Kursaal, and, rather to his discomfiture, saw the young gentleman laying down his Napoleons pretty freely at the gambling table. He had not noticed us when we entered, and we

had watched him for some time before he perceived us, when he instantly left off, and muttered something about just trying it for the fun of the thing. I do not think I have ever described this same Kursaal to you. It is a wonderful place, and certainly nothing that luxury and taste can devise is wanting to make it attractive. Through massive iron gates, always open however during the day, you enter by a sweeping carriage drive, lined on each side with orange trees in full blossom. The building itself was originally a large square one, with a portico supported by noble pillars. To this have been added, two extensive wings, which give an imposing width of frontage. Through a marble hall, you walk straight from the entrance door into a magnificent ball or concert room. It is used for one or other of these purposes, alternately, every week, both being gratuitous, and full evening dress a sufficient passport for admission. A door at one end of this apartment leads into a most comfortable room, elegantly and luxuriously furnished, where are to be found card and chess tables, and where many a comfortable looking old gentleman may be seen during any hour of the day, playing at chess, or backgammon, or draughts, and occasionally a party seated in solemn silence at a game of whist

or loo. This room leads into the principal gambling room, and it is here that the great business of the day, which is to supply the means of all this luxury, is transacted. It is a spacious hall. The ceilings and walls adorned with gay paintings in fresco, and with a vast amount of gilding. But all this is tempered and sobered down by the rich dark massive curtains, and hangings, and furniture, all of which are of deep maroon coloured velvet. Down the centre of this apartment run oblong tables, adapted for the game of rouge et noir, or roulette. Round these tables, as close as they can sit, were ranged the players, ladies and gentlemen, all intent on their game, but expressing the anxiety they felt only by the eager expression of their countenances—not a sound being heard but the dealing of the packs of cards by the two agents for the establishment, who sit in the centre of each table, and call out the winning colour as they deal the cards, raking the money of those who lose towards themselves, or pushing the amount gained towards the winners with the same imperturbable gravity. I do not understand the principles of the game, nor have I the smallest curiosity to do so. If I had any gambling tendencies, I think the sight of all the magnificence supported by the losses of thousands of victims

annually, would cure me. One old man was very successful the day we were there, and he quite excited our curiosity from his peculiar appearance, and the coolness with which he raked whole handsful of gold to his side of the table, and then, seemingly without counting them, laid another heap of glittering coin on the colour he had selected. He was a tall, spare man, with reddish gray hair, whiskers and moustaches, the latter six inches long at least. His features high and sharp, and his keen gray eye having a most unpleasing expression. We found it was General Haynau, of brewery memory, and could give full credit to the story of his having caused a woman to be flogged for the political offences of her husband. From this room we entered a somewhat smaller one, where was a roulette table, also surrounded by its votaries, and this room again led into the reading room, which is arranged with every attention to comfort, and supplied with all the leading journals of the day—French, English, German, etc. This room has a door leading into the entrance hall, and I think we all breathed freer as we emerged from it. The other wing of the building is occupied by an immense dining saloon, ornamented also by the most beautiful fresco paintings of fruits,

flowers, game, etc., drawn to the life. There are besides several smaller refreshment rooms, where ices and confectionaries are to be had; and these and the dinners, at one and five o'clock, are the only things in the establishment that you are expected to pay for. We are getting tired of this constant gaiety, and have for some days past chosen rather to walk in the beautiful castle gardens, or in the woods, which are within half a mile of the town. Here we can sit and listen to the distant murmur of voices, and even hear the airs played by the band at the gardens, while we are in perfect solitude.

For some days past Mary has been confined to the house with one of her bad headachs; but George and I have been particularly struck with a young couple—evidently English—who have quite taken our fancy. We seem to meet at every turn, and, I fancy—I suppose it is fancy—that they are interested in us. We certainly honour each other with a very broad stare. At first I believed that they were man and wife, but I begin to think they are too like each other for that; there is a considerable difference in their age—ten or twelve years, I should think. Perhaps they are cousins married to each other. George says she is the most grace-

ful woman he has seen here; and I think him the most interesting looking man I ever saw. I could make quite a romance out of him, and so we tease each other about our mutual fancies. It is very amusing singling out some from the motley crowd, and trying to make out a history for them. I wonder if we shall ever discover the true one of our interesting couple, as we call them. There is another character who has afforded us no small entertainment, but she is only to be met with where the gay and fashionable throng thickest. She is a funny-looking little woman, with an eye-glass constantly at her eye, looking out with restless eagerness for any person of title, or of consequence, bowing and doing the agreeable to them in the most obsequious manner, while some seem to shun, and all to laugh at her. I do not know how often I have heard her say, as we passed, ogling some particularly stylish-looking person, "Who is she, or he? any one worth knowing?" She seems bent on finding out who our interesting couple may be. They have more than once been seen bowing and speaking to some of the aristocrats, so no fear but she will find out who they are. I wish we could be equally clever.

Now I think it is time to draw this long

crossed letter to a close; but you know we agreed that we should write about all we saw and were interested in, and I know of old that your patience with all my nonsense is inexhaustible.

FROM MARY TO HER MOTHER.

Homburg, August.

I have not been very well for some little time past, my own dear mother, and now I have so much to tell you that I scarcely know where or how to begin. Although I thought it would not be fair to speak of it to George or Emma, to you it is my duty to mention a most unpleasant surprise which I got last week, in the shape of a formal proposal of marriage from that wild young scapegrace O'Mara. I certainly had feared at first, lest he might take a fancy to Emma, but once satisfied on that subject, it never occurred to me that he would dream of her sober sister, as she calls me; and I really thought so little of him, that I was completely taken by surprise when he declared his sentiments. You may be sure I was not long in giving him his answer, which I did more civilly than I might otherwise have done, out of regret for my own stupidity in not having anticipated and pre-

vented his coming to such a length; the fact is, the thing seemed so preposterous, it had never once entered my mind as possible. To my great relief he went off to Baden-Baden next day, as it would have been awkward to meet him daily, after what had passed, and, at any rate, we were getting tired of having him constantly with us, constantly cracking jokes, or making the most atrocious puns.

But I have a much more interesting piece of news for you, my dear mother, and one in which I know I shall have all your sympathy. Yesterday, being Sunday, we had determined on attending service at a village, in the neighbourhood where Mr B——, the well-known author of the "Family of Bethany," was to preach. This village of Fredericksdorf is particularly interesting as being still inhabited by a colony of French Protestants, descendants of some of the refugees who fled to Germany and other countries from the persecutions, which followed on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The inhabitants still retain their own language and primitive customs, and many of them know nothing of German, though living in the heart of Germany. Their pastors are usually drawn from the Protestant cantons of Switzerland, and their service is of the simplest kind. We drove to

Fredericksdorf, which is about three miles distant from Homburg, and, dismissing the fiacre, determined on walking home. There was something peculiarly solemn and touching in joining in worship with these simple peasants. The spirits of their forefathers, who had counted all things but loss that they might win Christ, who had literally given up all, that they might follow and worship Him with clear consciences, seemed to be among us; and when we sung the opening hymn, I could not help thinking how they must have felt, when, on this very spot, they had dared, for the first time for many years, perhaps, to lift up their voices in praise of Him for whom they had suffered so much. The prayer was solemn and fervent; indeed, the whole appearance and manner of Mr B—— reminded me of what I could imagine the apostle John to have been. He preached on the finding of Moses by Pharaoh's daughter, and drew a vivid picture of the deep distress of the Israelites under their cruel and apparently hopeless bondage, showing that by the very circumstance which seemed as if it must crush them, namely, the killing of every male child, God was quietly and surely working out their deliverance. All this he applied so earnestly and beautifully to the dealing of God's

providence towards nations, families, and individuals, that I am sure it must have come home to every heart. Emma, who has improved wonderfully in her French, and is making rapid progress with German, was quite able to follow him. George had more difficulty. Much solemnized, we rose at the close of the service to leave the church, and as we reached the door, Emma whispered to me, "See, Mary, there is our interesting couple coming down from the gallery." I turned to look, when imagine my surprise at seeing Lucy and Mr Taylor standing within a yard of me. Lucy sprung forward, but my head was in a whirl. In an instant of time, our interview under the large oak at Hanfield; Mr Taylor's appearance as I last saw him in the streets of Taunton, after bidding him, as I thought, farewell for ever; his marriage, and what I had felt on that occasion—all seemed to burst over my mind like a torrent; the next moment I had fainted. I fear you will think this was very weak of me; I thought so myself, when sufficiently recovered to recollect with a burning blush that I had betrayed myself; but the sudden meeting had taken me quite by surprise. Every kindness and attention were paid to me by the simple people who crowded round, offering assistance, but there

was little to be done; a draught of cold water and the fresh air soon revived me, and I determined on walking home, as had been originally planned.

The whole walk between Fredericksdorf and Homburg is lovely; a footpath, leading through some meadows and cornfields, soon brings you into the woods which skirt the town on this side, and which are completely intersected by paths leading to the different villages round. The day was extremely sultry, and the shade of the woods most grateful. Mr Taylor and George had insisted on my taking an arm of each, and thus supported, I soon got over my faintishness, and but for a sort of awkward silence which I felt it particularly difficult to break, I could have quite enjoyed my walk. Lucy and Emma seemed to strike up an acquaintance and friendship at once, and as they walked much before us, we could hear, every now and then, their clear ringing laugh and lively talk, while they would occasionally stop to let us come up to them. At last, after we had sat a considerable time under the shade of some large trees, on rising to proceed, Mr Taylor and George as before offered me their arms, when Lucy said, "I wish I could get up a faint, and then perhaps some one would offer me an arm. Poor Miss Emma and I are both so

tired, we can scarcely walk, but no one thinks of lending us any assistance. Really, William, you or Mr Maxwell must take pity on us forlorn damsels, or I for one shall give up, and you may come back for me." Upon this, she sat herself composedly down, and as her brother made not the smallest attempt to leave my arm, of course George was obliged laughingly to offer her his. She sprung up in an instant, without much appearance of fatigue, took his proffered arm, and told Emma to take the other, and they all three walked off at a pretty rapid pace, while Lucy threw me one of those merry glances I had so often seen her give as a girl, when she had succeeded in some piece of fun or mischief.

Mr Taylor and I walked on for some minutes in total silence. At last he said, "It was under different circumstances, and with far different feelings that I last stood alone with you, under the green trees and blue sky, Miss Mathieson. Then I was young and full of hope, and, in my vain folly, would not doubt that you would share my sentiments, and that because I loved so warmly and truly myself, my love must of necessity be returned. You taught me on that occasion a better estimate of myself; the lesson was a bitter and a humili-

ating one. Perhaps you will wonder that I should refer to it, but I have thought it possible that the chastened and subdued man might find more acceptance than the thoughtless, headstrong youth you once knew me to be."

I shook so much that my knees would scarcely support me. He felt that I trembled, and made me sit down on a log of wood close to the pathway.

"What am I to understand from your silence," he said, after a minute's pause; "you are incapable of trifling with me; your present agitation and silence raise hopes which I had scarcely dared to entertain. I did not intend to speak to you on this subject, till you had more opportunity of judging of me as I am now; but left alone, as we so unexpectedly have been, through Lucy's intervention, I could think and speak only of what was uppermost in my mind."

"Did Lucy know your intentions," I said, glad of any thing to say.

"Oh, I never spoke to her on the subject, but I think she was aware of what has been passing in my mind, as from the moment she heard of your being in Germany, she insisted on my bringing her, and has often spoken of you in a way

which clearly showed me, that she penetrated my secret; but that is nothing to the purpose. I ask you now, earnestly and solemnly, as so much of my future happiness, and the well-being of my children, depends on your answer. Can you love one who loves you so warmly, and will do all in his power to deserve your love in return?" I could not speak, but he seemed to take for granted that silence spoke consent, as he seated himself beside me, and with his arm round my waist, called me by my christian name. "But after all," he said, laughing, after a few minutes, "mind you have only my word for it that I am more wise and sober than of yore. What if you should find me very little changed; will your old dislike return?"

"Did I ever dislike you?" I asked, smiling.

"Why, something like it, I suppose, for you dismissed my suit somewhat summarily." Then looking at me very seriously for a moment, he said, "Can it be that Julia's surmise was true, and that you ever really cared for me, and refused me only from a sense of duty?"

"Did Julia ever speak to you on the subject," I said, breathlessly.

"She did, but it was on her death-bed. Three

months before she gave birth to the twins, and lost her own life in giving them theirs, she received a letter from you in answer to an often repeated invitation from her to visit us. When she had read it, she said, 'Well, I never could have believed that Mary would be capricious or forgetful of her friends, yet her excuses for never coming to see me, her oldest and most intimate friend, are so trifling and unmeaning, that I begin to feel, that the will and not the way is wanting.' She looked up at me as she spoke, and as I tried to frame an answer, I caught her eye fixed on me with an expression which I shall not soon forget. She changed the subject, and from that day till the day she died, never again spoke of you, except it might be casually, if a letter had arrived, or any circumstance with which you were connected was mentioned. On her death-bed, when she knew there was no hope, she reminded me of this circumstance, and said, 'There has been something between you and Mary—tell me all.' I told her that I had proposed to you and been rejected. She was silent for a short time, and then said, 'Poor Mary, I now understand much that had been unaccountable in her conduct and letters. She loved you, and still loves you—that is my con-

viction, and she is the only person I should feel happy in thinking was to become the mother of my children.'

"I thought her own partiality had perhaps blinded her; and yet from the time I expected to meet you once more, and had determined on again asking you to become my wife, these words have encouraged and cheered me. I felt that I was at any rate fulfilling the last wish of the best of wives, who never gave me a single cause of uneasiness, except in the feeling that I had not been able to bring her the whole devotion of heart which she deserved. But if you really cared a straw for me," he added more cheerfully, "why did you say me nay, or why do not the same reasons hold good now?"

"Oh, it is quite different," I said; "you have married once to please your parents, and are therefore entitled now to please yourself; however if I believed that our union would be as disagreeable to them now, as I knew it to be then, I should still be very doubtful as to what I ought to do; but the change in the circumstances of our family, places me on an altogether different footing. The son of Sir William Taylor could with propriety marry the sister of a Scottish laird in affluent circumstances,

when his marriage with his sister's governess would be a misalliance." And so we chatted of the past, the present, and the future, having risen from our resting-place, and walking leisurely through the green-wood, while the birds sang merrily over our heads, and I thought the sun shone brighter, and that everything in nature looked more beautiful than I had ever seen them before. At last, on the skirts of the wood, as you enter the open country again, before getting into Homburg, we came upon the rest of our party.

"Here they are at last," said Lucy; "I hope you have not felt faint again, Miss Mathieson."

"I made Miss Mathieson sit down," said her brother, "as she seemed tired."

Lucy came round, drew my arm affectionately through hers, and said, "Well I am quite rested now, so I will give you the support of my arm;" and thus we walked together into the town. And so you see, my dear mother, all my prospects in life seem changed, and I am happy, oh, so happy! I have several times, both last night and to-day, thought that this could not last, but the thought is foolish, and I shall not allow myself to indulge in needless fears.

FROM GEORGE TO HIS MOTHER.

So after all, my dear mother, our sober sister is not altogether so angelic as I had begun to fancy, but has her human weaknesses, and human affections, like other folks. That fainting fit, as we came out of church, and met Mr Taylor and his sister, spoke volumes, and seemed to tell us in a moment the whole history of the last ten years of her existence. I wish you could see her now, so bright and cheerful. There is still something subdued and chastened in her appearance and manner, but it only enhances the pleasure one feels in seeing her bright smile, or hearing her merry laugh. She has made no confessions—that was unnecessary—we know all without; but when Emma and I quiz her—and the former does it unmercifully—there is no longer the sad look that silenced us so completely before. As to Miss Taylor, she is enchanting; I am surprised Mary never told us how strikingly graceful she is. She and Emma are great friends already, and are constantly together. We have been to two or three pic-nics with them, and have enjoyed them amazingly.

Yesterday we went to the top of the Feldberg,

the highest mountain in the Taunus range, along with a large party which had been got together by one of the resident English here well skilled in such matters. A curious motley group we were when all assembled. There were thirty of us altogether, but only two conveyances, one of them being a sort of monster omnibus, yclept the elephant, warranted to hold twenty-four inside. There were no outsides, the thing being only covered with coarse leather. Such a jingling, ricketty piece of antiquity you never beheld—one could imagine Noah having driven to the ark in it, accompanied by his family and some of the tame animals. In this delectable affair, the young people were to go, and some of the elders in the other carriage, which was a more civilised turn-out, holding six. Of course we came under the category of young people, and were therefore desired to take our places in the elephant. There were, besides others, three sweet "girls," not more than sixty, with the most winning simplicity of manners, their wigs fastened on with the most bewitching flowers, and altogether their whole dress and appearance calculated to do dreadful damage to the gentlemen's hearts—mine has been in a flutter ever since. We had a German colonel, rather broader than he was long,

who was very useful in blowing up the coachman whenever our carriage came to a dead halt, which did not happen oftener than every quarter of an hour, sometimes from the horses positively refusing to budge, sometimes from the monster machine itself having got embedded in clay, or in a bank, with the wheels on one side tilting up a yard higher than the others. On these occasions, after falling over one another, like a card-house when blown down, we had all to turn out, and sometimes to put our hands to the wheels to extricate them. At last, when the ascent became very steep, and these reverses of fortune more numerous, the greater part of us determined on walking up the rest of the way. The colonel was too fat and the (old) young ladies had set their caps at him, so they also remained. His daughters, two nice pretty fair-haired girls who talked English well, walked with us—that is with Miss Taylor, Emma, and me —for as to Mr Taylor and Mary, they mysteriously disappeared, and got to the top in a balloon, I think, for we found them there when we reached it. The rest of the party, some English, some French, some German, walked before or behind in detachments.

We had a splendid view at first, but it began to

rain soon after, and we had to take our dinner in a rough wooden shed, which not being water-tight, several were obliged to put up umbrellas, to shield themselves from the dripping roof. We had a merry time, however, and felt independent of the elements. After dinner, some one proposed, as it was still raining heavily, that we should have a song from some of the ladies, and one of the gentlemen mischievously insisted that the Miss Wilmingtons—they of the wreaths whom I mentioned before—should sing. After the due proportion of assurances that they had not sung for an age, that they never sang without music, etc., two of them began to sing "Ye banks and braes." They both sang out of tune, and, with their cracked voices, produced such sounds that no mortal could withstand it. In a short time every one was choking with laughter, and I had really some apprehension that the old colonel would have gone off into a fit of apoplexy with the suppression of his risible inclinations. We were too thankful at the close of the song to make a rush to the door, and examine the state of the weather, and then gave way to our pent up feelings, by receiving the announcement that it was clearing, with a shout of laughter. Up went

parasols and umbrellas, and out we all sallied, but it was too wet to sit on the grass, and the distant scenery being shrouded in mist, we were rather at a loss what to do with ourselves, the top of a mountain on a wet afternoon not being the most entertaining place in the world. After a time, therefore, the old elephant was again brought out, and we packed in again, making up for minor miseries of wet and jolting, by fun and merriment, which was generally led on by Miss Taylor, backed by Emma. We came round by Konigstein, a very pretty ruin, and at a hotel close by, took coffee, which after our wetting was most refreshing. What with the bad horses, the heavy load, and the lumbering machine, we were about two hours longer than we should have been in coming home, where we did not arrive till nearly ten. Tired and draggled the poor ladies certainly were, but they all said they had enjoyed themselves.

From the German girls we learnt that we could get some nicely furnished apartments in the same house where they live at Frankfort, and we propose going to-morrow to look at them, as we shall certainly spend some of the winter months in that city. Mr Taylor and his sister want to make some purchases, so they are to accompany us.

We shall hire a carriage and spend the day there, the distance being only about two German, or nine of our English miles.

FROM EMMA TO A FRIEND.

We are now settled down for the winter at Frankfort, after having spent three very pleasant months at Homburg. We got rather tired of the constant flutter there latterly, and scarcely ever went to the gay promenades in the afternoon, the whole country round affording us delightful walks and drives. Our pleasure was much enhanced by having the company of Mr and Miss Taylor, both delightful in their way, only he was so greatly taken up with Mary, that we did not get so much of the benefit of his society. Lucy, on the contrary, was from the same cause more thrown upon me, and I have found her a most amusing, agreeable companion. George, I am sure, is head over ears in love with her; and I do not think she is indifferent to him, as she never torments him, though she does all the rest of us. Mr Taylor is obliged to go to England on business for a month; so, as he had promised to take Lucy back by Paris, and cannot do so just now, he is to leave her with us

during his absence, and come back again to take her home. He leaves next week.

Lucy has just come in, and is making them all laugh so much, I scarcely know what I am writing —so I must listen to their conversation, and will give you the benefit of it; but I shall not succeed in amusing you as she is doing us, because her manner, and the expression of her countenance, are half the fun.

Lucy has thrown herself on the sofa. It is half-past four. "Guess where I have come from, Mary?" Mary cannot guess.

"Why, from a dinner party; where we have had all the delicacies of the season—champagne, claret, etc. etc.; and here I am in broad daylight to tell the tale. What would they think of such vandalism at home?"

"Oh, do tell us all about it," said George. "What was your dinner hour?"

"One o'clock, delayed to that late hour, I believe, in honour of the English guests."

"But I thought most of the better classes had adopted French hours, as they call a six o'clock dinner," said Mary.

"Oh, I believe they have, but our friends are of the old school, or rather the head of the family

is some eighty years of age, and so keeps up the hours he was accustomed to when a boy. I will not answer for his not dining at eleven when the family are alone; however, William and I got our invitation yesterday for a quiet dinner, with some apology for the early hour, on the score of the old gentleman's not liking to be put out of his way. That is the reason I did not see you yesterday afternoon. I was wandering about among my few German friends, to learn the etiquette of a one o'clock dinner. The idea of remaining till nine o'clock was so appalling, and I did not know but this might be required. I had serious thoughts of taking a pin-cushion in my pocket, to give William and myself an occasional *jag*, if we should be inclined to sleep. In fact, I was in despair till I learnt that we were not expected to remain after coffee had been handed round, which would be shortly after dinner. This information proved a great relief to my mind."

"And were there many people?" asked Mary.

"Oh no; only two strangers besides ourselves, a German officer and his wife, and the family themselves, consisting of the old father, the mother, four sons and two daughters, all very pleasant people, and most of them speaking English well;

but as the old people did not understand it, the general conversation was carried on in French."

"And what sort of an entertainment had you?"

"I must begin at the beginning, for I set off with a grand blunder. The day being so fine, and the dinner so early, I thought it would be awkward to drive to the house dressed—so we walked. The streets being rather dirty, I had put on India rubber shoes, fancy, therefore, my consternation at being shown straight into the drawing-room, bonnet and all. That is to say, there is no getting straight into one of these German drawing-rooms, there being always one or more rooms to go through, before you get to the one occupied by the family. But as the party was small, they occupied the second room only, and the double doors between the two rooms being open, we were formally announced. I had not German enough to ask the man to show me to a bed-room, which I believe he would at any rate have considered a most extraordinary request."

"What did you do?" said Mary.

"What could I do, but resign myself to my fate. Some of the ladies came forward. I had never seen one of them, as William had gone alone, and delivered the letter of introduction. I

shook hands with them, and they begged me to take off my bonnet. They took it from me, and helped me to take off my shawl, and I sat down to take off my goloshes, in mortal dread that some one would offer to help me, but their muddy state offered no attractions, so I had the satisfaction of dirtying no one's fingers but my own. It was very pleasant, too, to see myself reflected by mirrors on every side, and discover that my bonnet had somewhat disordered my hair, and that my brooch was a little awry. Then I had a spicy pair of white kid gloves in my pocket, which I never had the presence of mind to bring out of it, being too much discomfited at the numerous witnesses of my toilet."

"But the dinner," said George; "what had you for dinner?"

"Ah, that is always the interesting part of the story for you men; but how should I know what there was for dinner, when all my thoughts were occupied by the unbecoming appearance of my hair, and by wondering whether the four handsome sons of our landlord would notice it; or how I should best manage to do the agreeable to them. I had enough to think of without noticing the mere creature comforts."

"Come now, Lucy," said Mary, "that is all affectation. You know every dish you had, as well as you know what is on that table at this moment."

"Well, I have a sort of dreamy recollection of seeing nothing on the table when we sat down to dinner but a very picturesque, many-coloured cake, in the middle of the table, some almonds and raisins, figs, etc.; and imagining that, after all, they had made a mistake in the invitation, and asked us to dinner meaning lunch; and wondering how much of the good things before us would suffice William for dinner, as we had none ordered at home, and hoping that none of the rest of the company might be hungry.

"I think it was about this stage of my reflections that a most insinuating voice asked me to take soup, and one of the four sons helped me to some which was being handed round. The same voice invited me to take first, boulli, of course, then, if I recollect right, in the following order:—fricassee, mutton chops, stewed chestnuts, sour kraut, boiled chicken, fried potatoes, fish, sausages, pudding, stewed pears, roast veal, roast mutton, cake, and fruit. I believe I ought in politeness to have partaken of each, but this stretch of civili-

zation was beyond my reach; so I could only say to more than half of the things offered, 'Merci,' which the German waiter seemed to know by instinct meant, 'No, I thank you,' though why 'thank you,' should mean, 'No, I thank you,' I leave it to the French and Germans to explain, as I understand they both use the same idiom."

"And what did you do after dinner?" asked George.

"Behaved like Christian men and women, to be sure; we all rose from table together—after having sat two mortal hours and a half at it—and repaired to the drawing-room, where, in about half an hour, we had coffee handed to us; and after again having the pleasure of putting on all my things before the assembled company, we left, and I came straight here; while William is gone off to the bank, and to some shops, and is coming to fetch me, when I mean to go home to breakfast."

"To breakfast!"

"Yes, to breakfast; why, is'nt this to-morrow morning? I dined and had coffee an age ago."

Mr Taylor has just come in, and proposes that as he and his sister are rather unsettled with their early dinner, we should all go down to the gardens of a hotel situated on the banks of the Maine,

where a band of music plays every evening, and coffee and ices are to be had, being handed to those who call for them in the open air.

It is quite a fashionable resort, but getting rather late in the season for it. However, the weather is extremely mild, so there are still many visitors, and we are all pleased at the thoughts of going. So, good-bye, I must go and get ready.

FROM LUCY TO HER BROTHER.

Frankfort.

You need be in no hurry to come and fetch me, dear William, as I am thoroughly enjoying myself, and shall be quite sorry to leave—I meet with so much kindness from all. This letter, however, is intended as a sort of grumble at your friend Miss Mary, whom you really must scold for having unmercifully dragged me into a second Babel, from whence I am but just emancipated, and while my wrath is warm, I write to make my complaints to you. The whole affair is this—Mary had heard that a Lutheran clergyman, some twenty-six English miles off, was going to have a baby baptized (his fourteenth or fifteenth, I believe).

Being of an inquiring turn of mind, she thought she would like to witness the ceremony; and being acquainted with the lady who was to stand sponsor, asked her if she might accompany her, and bring a friend—meaning me. Well, having got permission, she insisted that, whether I would or no, I should go, as she did not like to go alone. We took a few sandwiches, and sallied forth on a bitter cold day—the frost on the ground—starting by railway for our destination. You know of old, the deliberate speed of railways in these parts. The train started at nine A.M., but did not reach the station at which we were to stop till after twelve; and we had still a walk of two miles to our place of destination. In the railway carriage, we were introduced by the lady who was to be god-mamma, to some half-dozen clergymen, one of whom offered me a biscuit. In the liberality of my heart, I returned the compliment by offering my packet of sandwiches; but I had occasion to repent my rashness, for in a moment all had disappeared, as also the few biscuits that had been brought, so that we arrived at the minister's hungry as hawks, and had the satisfaction of hearing that, as a number of people were coming, and their means were limited, we were not to expect dinner. However, as they

thought we must be very cold, they had prepared some soup for us. This was comforting, at any rate; and a few minutes after, in walked a maid with a tray-full of tea-cups. These professed to hold soup, but the place is near some warm saline springs, and I am convinced the soup was concocted by no other cook than dame Nature herself. It tasted like warm salts. There were fourteen clergymen, with as many wives, and some sons and daughters, assembled. At last the baby was brought forth, preparatory to going to church. Poor little wretch, I wonder what an English baby would say to similar treatment. Bandaged tightly hand and foot, it lay the picture of resignation, looking exactly like a live mummy. It was laid on a pillow, and covered before leaving the house with a thick warm shawl, which I expected would smother it, but was relieved when we got into church and the shawl was removed, to hear it cry lustily. The church was a queer, antiquated looking place, with atrocious daubs, representing Scripture scenes, hung round the walls. There were also all sorts of impossible flowers, in faded paper, and covered with dust, hung in wreaths from pillar to pillar, under the gallery. The service was not very long; and the singing, which was principally

by the charity school children of the place, was lovely—all in parts. The baby was again enveloped in the shawl, and we went back to the house, which was close by. After we had taken off our bonnets and returned to the sitting-room, the gentlemen went into an adjoining room—leaving the door open, however—and began to smoke, so that, in a few minutes, they were lost to mortal view, at least to mine. They were to be heard, however, rather too well; and their voices, discussing in their deep gutterals, knotty points of politics or religion, mingling with the more treble voices of the ladies, engaged over their coffee in no less interesting discussions upon the pickling of French beans and sour kraut, formed a combination of sounds not to be described. The cup of coffee and little bit of cake that accompanied it, only served to whet our appetite the more, and by six o'clock, spite of tobacco smoke and noise, I was ravenous.

Just, as in a state of desperation, I was wondering whether we could not eat the baby, the doors were thrown open, tables brought in, and all the ladies began to assist to lay the cloth for some sort of meal. I did my best, but I cannot say much for the assistance I rendered, as I noticed that all I did was undone in a minute after. However,

certainly, in five minutes a table was laid for about thirty people, and in about five minutes more, it was covered down the middle with what looked like meat puddings, alternately with dishes of sausages, and stewed pears and chestnuts. This soon brought in the gentlemen, and we all sat down to supper. The puddings I found were a sort of fine minced meat, done up in some mysterious way in cabbage leaves. Whether it was our appetite or not, I do not know, but both Mary and I thought them delicious, and ate heartily of them, but not more so than our neighbours. We then took some stewed pears, and, in the innocence of our hearts, supposed the supper ended. The puddings and sausages were removed, when appeared to our astonishment two large roasts of veal, and one of mutton, and all began upon these, as if they had tasted nothing before; they eat with the fork dug into the meat, and held in the fist perpendicularly. Having now time to look about us, the eating habits of the people did not strike us as very refined; but it must be remembered that the Lutheran clergy seldom belong to the better classes, and with but few exceptions, are sadly wanting in the elegant habits of good society. Brandy and water, and some more smoking on the part of the

gentlemen, followed the supper; and we were thankful to exchange the fumes of these for the frosty night air, and were still more glad to be once more at home. I have sat up till very late to tell you of our day's work; and now I must beg you will write, and desire Mary to restrain her disposition for inquiry, and not drag me with her when she goes on such voyages of discovery.

FROM LUCY TO HER LITTLE NEPHEW.

Frankfort.

I know that my little Willie must be wishing to hear something about what aunt Lucy is doing, so far, far away. Well I will tell him what I was doing last night, and he must tell his little sisters all about it.

If Willie were here, he would not understand a word that the gentlemen and ladies say, or even the little children, for they do not speak English like Willie, and there are a great many things that they do, which Willie never saw done. Last night I was asked to spend the evening with a gentleman who has a great many little children, and some of them are older than Willie, and one is the same age, and one is as little as the twins. Well, when

I went in, though I do not understand very well what they say, I understood that they expected somebody whom they called Nicholaus, and some of them laughed when they spoke about him, and some of them seemed afraid. By and bye the door bell rang very loud, and the door was thrown wide open, and in walked a man looking very fierce, a fur coat hanging down to his feet, and with a long beard, and a frightful face. I am sure Willie would have been frightened to see him, and so were some of the little ones, but the big ones pulled his coat, and said, how do you do, Nicholaus, and then he turned round to beat them, for he had a large whip in one hand, and several parcels in the other. Then he told them that Nicholaus had come to reward the children who had been good all the year, since he came last, and to punish the bad. So he said he knew one little boy had been very naughty, and had given his sister a slap, and he must get a little touch of his whip, and he gave him a stroke with it. Some of the others got a whip, one because he had told a lie, and another had been disobedient; so after these had been whipped, he took out his parcels, and there was a pretty present for every one, and then he seemed to have no end of apples, nuts, and sugar plums in his pockets, which he threw on the

loor, and they scrambled for. It was such fun, I am sure Willie would have liked that.

At last this funny-looking Nicholaus went away, and soon after, the little children's papa came into the room, and they ran and told him that Nicholaus had been, and they wished their papa had seen him, and Nicholaus had known all about the naughty things they had done, he was such a wonderful Nicholaus; and their papa listened, and did not tell them a secret which I am going to tell Willie, and this was, that Nicholaus was their own dear papa after all, dressed up with an ugly mask on his face, so no wonder he knew whether they had been naughty or good, and could tell them all about it.

FROM EMMA TO HER BROTHERS.

December.

We have been so very gay this last week, that I feel almost in a maze, but I must let you know something of what we have been doing during the merry Christmas time. We have seen such lovely Christmas trees, I quite look forward to dress one up in German style when we come home again. As almost every one has a tree, and most of the relations

and some friends usually come on the night when it is lighted, it follows that they cannot all be had on the same night, and consequently we have been to see three or four on different nights. One I must tell you about, as it was marked with an event of some interest.

I have mentioned to you before in my letters, that in the first flat of this house, lived a nice old Colonel with two daughters, Anna and Bertha von Arnbach. These people have been extremely kind to us, and the girls and we have been quite intimate. We were invited to their Christmas tree on Monday evening, and went up about seven o'clock. You know we live on the ground floor. We found a large party assembled in one of the sitting rooms; among the rest a handsome young officer, in the white uniform of Austria, seemed, I thought, to be paying great attention to Anna von Arnbach. After sitting for a short time, and wondering why the double doors leading to the other rooms, which usually stand open, were closed, they were suddenly opened, and we all went into the next room, which was darkened, and arranged as far as possible as a stable. Racks of hay and stable furniture were just visible by the light of a beautiful transparency of a sleeping infant, while

from behind we heard some voices singing a Christmas hymn. When this was ended, the doors leading into another room were thrown open, and a perfect blaze of light, poured in upon us. In the centre of the room was a fir tree about seven feet high, covered with lights, and all sorts of glistering bon-bons and ornaments, while several tables were arranged with great taste through the room, with various presents on them, giving to the whole the appearance of a fancy sale. There were new ball dresses, and bonnets, and other articles of dress, from the old Colonel to his daughters; an uncle gave one of them a watch, and another a bracelet, and so on. There were a purse and a smoking cap for George, a ring for Mary, and hair bracelets for Lucy and me from the two Arnbachs, and a beautiful bouquet of flowers from the young Austrian officer to Anna. She passed it to me to look at, and I thought I noticed a white packet tied up in the centre of it, to which I drew her attention.

"What can it be?" she said, her hands trembling so much, I had to help her to untie the flowers; at last we came to the mysterious packet, which was sealed and addressed—"To my Beloved." She blushed scarlet; as she knew that I

could read the German character, she turned it quickly to the other side, broke the seals, and took out a most elegant ornament attached to a small gold chain to hang round her neck. Meanwhile the old Colonel had been called out of the room by young Von Eldenheim, the Austrian officer, and just as Anna was looking at me imploringly not to tell, and had hidden her ornament, her papa came and called her out of the room. We had plenty to do in looking at all the presents, etc., and they were scarcely missed; but in less than half an hour, the old gentleman returned with Anna and young Von Eldenheim, the former blushing, but looking happy, and the father announced that they were a betrothed couple. Immediately there was such a shaking of hands, and kissing and congratulation! She shortly after slipped out of the room, and returned with the present she had received in her bouquet, fastened round her neck. The two following days were occupied in receiving the congratulations of all their friends, the affair being made as public as possible. They begged us to help them to receive, and though we could not be of much use, we went just to see the thing. There we all sat in state, while one after another came in, and after making their con-

gratulations, and taking some cake and wine, left to make room for others.

Next week the young couple must go in a carriage to return all these calls, which it will take them some days to do; and they are already overwhelmed with invitations to parties for nearly a month to come.

All this fracas elicited from Lucy this morning the remark, that she was thankful she was not likely to become one of these three things in Germany—a bride, a baby, or a cow.

"A baby!" said Anna von Arnbach, laughing, "why not a baby? and a cow? I don't understand you."

"Why, the poor babies are made mummies of, and as to the cows, an English cow would soon die of grief, if it were shut up always in a stable, and never to catch a glimpse of the green fields except from a dusty road, where it is toiling along, dragging a cart behind it."

"Ah, you are droll, Miss Lucy, but I find it very pleasant to be a bride," was Anna's answer. They are called bride and bridegroom here from the time they are betrothed, till they are married, when they are simply man and wife, and all the visiting and gaiety is at an end.

FROM EMMA TO HER MOTHER.

January.

In my last letter, I mentioned the betrothal of Anna von Arnbach, with all the ceremony and fuss attending it. I have now to tell you of one far more interesting to us all, but which has been much more quietly entered into. Do not, however, suppose that I am the heroine. Oh dear! no; such a fate seems as far as ever from me, unless I try to follow the example of the Miss Wilmington's in storming old Colonel von Arnbach's heart—an attempt to which I am afraid I shall be driven in mere self-defence, as George is actually engaged to Lucy, and Mr Taylor being expected back to-morrow, I shall stand in a most painful position as regards the two couples, being quite one too many in the party.

But I must tell all I know of this important affair, which I have George's permission to announce to you, as he felt a little awkward in writing about it himself. You must know, then, that yesterday we went to a very large party given by the Countess ——. Mary does not go to these gay entertainments, but the Von Arnbachs had procured invitations for George, Lucy, and

myself, and we accompanied them. It was a brilliant scene—a large suite of rooms, gaily and most tastefully adorned with flowers, besides two large conservatories, were all thrown open, and brilliantly lighted. The gay dresses of the ladies, and their magnificent jewellery, produced a dazzling effect; it seemed a perfect maze of splendour, luxury, and beauty. After one or two polkas with Lucy, George and she disappeared. Bertha von Arnbach and I sought them in vain in the gay throng, and soon having both of us obtained partners, we forgot to inquire about them. Supper was announced, and certainly the elegance and magnificence of the entertainment quite astonished my rustic simplicity. As we entered the supper-room (I had kept near the Von Arnbachs) I saw George leading Lucy to the table, and I managed to get seated next them. I heard him say, "What will you take, dear Lucy?" I immediately started and looked at her, as he has always called her Miss Taylor. She blushed deeply and looked down, and her look spoke volumes. I could not resist a little whispered bantering, as she sat next me, but she bore it all so meekly, and was so humble and unlike herself, that I was quite touched at last, and was obliged to give over, which I felt particularly

hard, as it really seems the only resource left to me to tease the two engaged pairs. As we drove home, Lucy was very silent, and hastened to her room on our return. I went in, as usual, to say good night, before going to bed, and found her sitting with all her things on, just as she had come home, and looking so very solemn, that I felt almost frightened. "What is the matter, Lucy?" I said. She started as if she had scarcely noticed my coming in.

"The matter—nothing."

"You don't repent already," I said, putting back her hair from her forehead.

"Oh no, but I wish I may be worthy of your brother. I am so volatile, I am afraid your mother will not like me. She would think me too thoughtless, and I know what a high opinion Mr Maxwell has of her judgment."

"Come, call him George at once," I said laughing, "and don't be afraid of mamma; she knows and loves you already, as we all did before we saw you. You know you were Mary's own child, but you are agitated, and this evening's excitement, with the glare and noise, has made you nervous. You will be better to-morrow."

And so she has been. To-day she is more

like herself again, only quieter than usual. We expect Mr Taylor this evening, and, though she is so quiet and undemonstrative, I can see that Mary is quite in a flutter. He only intends staying a week, and then Lucy and he go back by way of Paris, as their father and mother are anxious to have them both at home again. Mary has received one or two very kind letters from Lady Taylor, expressing pleasure at the thoughts of her son being united to one for whom she had always entertained a sincere respect, etc. I hope she may be equally pleased with Lucy's engagement. If she is not, she must blame herself, as she knew beforehand of Lucy's proposed visit to us during Mr Taylor's absence, and might have prevented it. Strange that we are to be doubly allied with that proud haughty woman. I am sure I shall be afraid of her.

FROM MARY TO HER MOTHER.

March.

We have just heard, my dear mother, of the safe return of Mr Taylor and Lucy to Hanfield, after a sojourn of two months in Paris, where they had several friends to visit. It had been agreed

that George's engagement to Lucy should not be mentioned to her parents till her return home, as Mr Taylor wished to tell them himself. To-day George received a kind and most cordial note from the good old baronet, and I got a letter from Lady Taylor, expressing herself as being much satisfied with what she had heard from her son, of her future son-in-law, and inviting us to visit Hanfield before we return to Scotland—an invitation which we intend accepting.

Both Mr Taylor and Lucy are anxious that the marriages should take place on the same day at Hanfield, but of course all these arrangements must be talked over with you before we come to any settlement. By the last letter George received from Millholm, they seemed to think the house will not be finished till the end of June, so we propose leaving this in the beginning of that month, spending two or three weeks in Paris, then going to Hanfield for a week or ten days, and on to Scotland, when we can talk over our plans with you, my own dear mother.

Last week we had a very pleasant excursion to Heidelberg, where we staid four days, and were enchanted with the glorious old castle and the surrounding scenery. The Von Arnbachs and Anna's

betrothed bridegroom were of the party. The love-making was desperate, but that is thought quite the thing here with a betrothed pair. They evidently could not understand our more sober method of going on, and would scarcely believe Emma, when she told them of the double engagement.

Yesterday the marriage took place, and of course we were present. It was very nicely managed on the whole, but not like an English wedding. The house was beautifully decorated. Hothouse flowers hired in for the occasion formed quite a grove up the staircase, wreaths of flowers surmounted the doors, most tastefully arranged bouquets adorned the drawing-room. At about ten o'clock, the young couple, in plain morning costume, drove to the Römerberg, which might represent the Parliament House in Edinburgh, as the courts of justice are held there. They were accompanied by the bride's father, and a brother of the bridegroom's, and were there married by the civil authority, which marriage is quite valid—the religious ceremony being entirely optional. They were back again at twelve, and at one the company assembled. The bride wore a rich white silk dress, made high to the throat, and had a veil fastened into her hair with myrtle, the bridal

flower here. She was a little pale and agitated, but looked very pretty. There were about six private carriages, which contained their immediate friends; we had hired one for the occasion.

We drove to church, and were seated in the front pews, while the bride and bridegroom went forward to the railing in front of the communion table, at which stood the clergyman. First of all, we sang a psalm, then there was a prayer, then a very long address, another psalm, and another prayer. The service occupied upwards of an hour, during the whole of which time, the young couple stood. Poor Anna looked sometimes as if about to faint, but happily did not do so. As soon as we got back to the house, the bride changed her dress, and a carriage, which was waiting for them, drove the happy pair to the railway station. They propose going to London, and talk of visiting Scotland. We wish them to do so very much, as we should be so glad to repay in some small measure, the kindness we have received from her family, and we know that you will do what is in your power to show that we are not ungrateful. After they had left, chocolate, sweetmeats, ices, wine, etc., were handed round in great profusion, and we separated at about four o'clock.

FROM MARY TO HER MOTHER.

June.

Our friends the Von Arnbachs are in sad affliction. Alas, my dearest mother, how ignorant we are of what a day may bring forth; how strange it seems to us that death should enter our dwellings, though we know so well that come he must to us all! We share in their sorrow, having become really warmly attached to them. Anna von Eldenheim, who returned with her husband from their tour about a fortnight since, and is staying with her father, came down stairs with her sister Bertha, ten days ago, to beg that we would accompany them the following day to the Forest.

It is an old Frankfort custom on Whit Tuesday to go to the wood, which is called the Forest, situated about three miles distant from the town, and they intended going. Of course we gladly accepted the invitation, and, though it was rather showery, we started in high spirits for our expedition—Major von Eldenheim on the box, and George and the colonel on horseback. When we got to the bridge over the Maine, which leads to the Forest, we were obliged to fall into line, the road being completely covered with convey-

ances of every description, laden with holiday keepers on their way to the scene of festivity. From the sort of wicker-work cart, drawn by a couple of patient cows, to the elegant equipage, with its four capering and richly caparisoned horses, every kind of vehicle had its representative there. We arrived at last at the Forest, into which we drove a considerable way, and then alighted. When we had penetrated the wood for a short distance, we found it alive with human beings, all in their best attire, and a very curious and gay scene the whole presented.

Here was a party of the elite of Frankfort seated at a small table, while their liveried servants waited on them, as they partook of an elegant collation accompanied by champagne, etc. Within two yards of them, seated on the ground, is a party of students come for the frolic from Heidelberg. They are drinking beer, and eating bread and cheese, and are incurring a risk of being trampled on by that party of dancers, consisting of servant maids and labouring men who are indulging in a boisterous polka. Punch and Judy, or its German representative, is making a dreadful noise at our side, so that we can scarcely hear the tune played by the squeaking fiddle that inspires the dancers.

We walked on and on, and still the same, yet ever varying, scene presented itself. At last some servants who had been preparing our repast, met us at an appointed spot, and told us that all was ready. We were really hungry, and I think the novelty and strangeness of the scene gave us an appetite. While we were still at the table, it came on to rain rather heavily, and poor Bertha von Arnbach, who was but lightly clothed, got very wet. As she was not strong, I thought it would be safer to return home immediately; she would not however hear of it, but insisted on our remaining for some time longer. At last we got into the carriage to return. It was an open one, and as we drove home, she several times complained of feeling very cold. I succeeded with some difficulty in forcing my shawl upon her, and when we got home, I insisted that she should take something warm and go to bed, and begged her father to send for a doctor. She seemed to think such precaution quite unnecessary, but I felt alarmed at the feverishness of her hand. Poor thing! inflammation of the lungs came on, and after four days of apparently great suffering she expired. I was with her constantly to the last, and had much comfort in the manner of her death, sad as the shock was to us all.

She and I had had many serious talks together before her illness, and I cannot but hope that these, along with the valued preaching of Mr. B., whose ministry they attended, had been a means of awakening her conscience, and leading her to the Saviour of sinners. Poor Anna, who has been brought up with her from childhood, and was devotedly attached to her, has been completely prostrated by the blow. It is her first grief (for she does not remember her mother), and very hard to bear. The old man, too, is in dreadful affliction. Oh, that we could alleviate their sorrow, but that is beyond human power. May He who inflicted the wound, pour in the balm of consolation. She was buried this morning. Yesterday I went to see her in her coffin; there she lay with her hands crossed on her breast, in one of them an exquisite bouquet had been placed, while a beautiful wreath of flowers, all white, was laid round the body inside the coffin. There was something touching in these emblems of frailty, imparting a melancholy beauty to stern death itself. This morning another wreath of white flowers was sent to the house by some of her young companions to be placed on the coffin.

George accompanied the sad procession. An immense number of carriages followed the body to

its last resting place. The whole was conducted very like a Scotch funeral, only there was a short prayer at the grave. I have been with poor Anna all day, and have written this when I ought to have been in bed. Farewell.

CHAPTER VII.

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown;
No traveller ever reach'd that bless'd abode,
Who found not thorns and briars on the road."—COWPER.

WE could not leave our kind friends the Von Arnbachs immediately after their sad bereavement, especially as poor Anna was extremely ill after her sister's death, and required much tender nursing. All that a kind and attentive husband could do, Major von Eldenheim did, but at such times a woman's presence seems more soothing, and the very mention of our leaving appeared to distress her so much, that we gave up all thoughts of returning by Paris, and determined on going back by Ostend in the end of the month.

Agitated as we had been by the death of poor Bertha von Arnbach, it is perhaps not surprising that I felt at this time a vague fear of coming misfortune, which I in vain endeavoured to convince myself was weak and absurd.

The letters I received from William Taylor were written in apparently good spirits, but Lucy's were often so sad, and so unlike her usual cheerful manner, that I could not help feeling afraid that all was not right. She spoke several times of a bad cold which her brother had caught a month before, and of an incessant cough, but, at the same time, she always expressed a hope that the warm summer season would soon remove all such complaints. Still I did not feel satisfied, and looked forward anxiously to our visit to Hanfield. It was therefore with a double feeling of sadness, that I bade farewell to our kind friends, and to Frankfort.

We had a pleasant passage down the Rhine, and reached Dover and London without any adventure worth recording. From London we could now, by the railway, in five hours, perform the journey, which had cost me twenty-four weary hours in a stage-coach on my first visit to Hanfield. Arrived at Taunton, we found there the carriage from Hanfield waiting for us, and received a message, that as they supposed we should have a great deal of luggage, they had none of them accompanied the carriage for fear of crowding us.

We were all rather dull; George a little shy at the thoughts of being scanned by his future father

and mother-in-law; Emma was sadly afraid of Lady Taylor; and I felt an oppression on my spirits which I could not account for, while my thoughts naturally wandered to the contrast in my position now, and on my first visit.

The twilight was melting into night when we drove through the lodge-gates and up to the house. On the steps, however, stood Sir William and his lady and Lucy. Each in their own way, though each so differently, welcomed us cordially to Hanfield, but while the old baronet took my hand in both of his, and shook it warmly, my eyes were wandering in search of his son. Lucy whispered as she kissed me, he is longing to see you, but we would not let him encounter this night air.

I followed her into the house with a sinking heart, and as we entered the hall, Mr Taylor opened the door of the library, and came forward to meet us, looking really so well, that, in a moment, all my fears were dissipated, and I wondered at having ever entertained them.

We were about an hour after, assembled in the drawing-room, a merry party, Sir William as frank and cordial as ever, and even Lady Taylor unbending very much from her usual dignity of manner, and having a softness, and even kindness, in her de-

meanour towards me, that quite touched me. I noticed, however, that whenever Mr Taylor coughed, both she and Lucy looked at him with an expression of anxiety, which I thought his appearance did not warrant. It was late when we retired to rest, but we did not do so before visiting the nursery, and kissing the bright young faces of its inmates as they rested on their pillows. There is certainly something peculiarly graceful in the attitudes of children asleep; but I rather think one principal cause of the pleasure which we feel in contemplating a sleeping child, is the striking contrast presented by its deep repose to its usual wayward restlessness.

The next morning early, I was awoke by a tap at my door, and the pattering of tiny feet in my room. Lucy had brought the children to see aunt Mary, the title of aunt being very liberally bestowed by them on lady visitors staying in the house.

The boy was a bright intelligent little fellow nearly seven years of age; the twins only wanted wings to have made them beau ideal of cherubs, as painted by the old masters. They climbed up on my bed, and we were soon the best of friends. Little William was much more shy, and slipped out of the room as soon as, by his aunt's desire, he had shaken hands with me. He was impatient to

go to his father, in whom, Lucy told me, the child's heart seemed bound up.

Mr Taylor did not come to breakfast, having passed, his sister said, a sleepless night.

I felt somewhat alarmed, as he had always been an early riser, and took an opportunity of asking Lucy after breakfast, whether she really thought her brother seriously ill, as I had not failed to notice her anxious looks.

I thought she rather evaded the question, as she merely said hurriedly, "Oh, he has a bad cold," and hastened out of the room. Again a painful forboding filled my mind. Lucy, the buoyant happy girl, was become serious, and in some degree reserved, and I felt sure that something weighed on her mind. Could it be that her brother repented his engagement to me, or that she really entertained serious apprehensions as to his health. The latter seemed the most likely, as I had met with so much cordiality from all the family, and had seen no change in William's own manner on the previous night. I was left alone to ponder over the matter. Sir William had ridden out, Lady Taylor never rose till late, Lucy was walking with George, and Aunt Emma, as they called her, had been dragged out for a walk by the twins.

I went to my own room, and sat sadly there, when shortly after, a very gentle tap came to my door, and little Willie asked me in his sweet childish voice to come and see papa, as he was up now.

As I entered the library, I was indeed shocked at Mr Taylor's appearance, so pale and languid he seemed, his cheek so hollow and his eye so bright.

"You must think me a most ungallant knight, Mary, not to have risen to breakfast, on the very first day of your arrival; but I did make the effort; so the will was not wanting; but a violent fit of coughing, which even caused me to bring up some blood, made me quite faint, and drove me back to my bed. This cold has hung so long about me, that it really seems to be undermining my constitution, which used to be such an iron one."

I suppose I turned very pale as he spoke, for he made many apologies for having unnecessarily alarmed me, and proposed taking a walk. As the day was lovely, and extremely warm, and he assured me that he was in the habit of going out every day, I agreed to go, and we both seemed instinctively to turn down the path which led to the place, where we had last met under such different circumstances. Little Willie accompanied us, now bounding before, now lagging behind to gather flowers for his own papa, as he always called him.

We sat down under the old oak, which, since I last sat there, had so often been the subject of my waking thoughts, and of my dreams by night; and there we talked over the past, recalled all the events of that memorable day, and those that followed it, and Mr Taylor spoke of the bright future, which seemed opening before us; but on this subject my heart could give no response; a dull undefined dread filled my mind, and stifled hope as it rose in answer to his glowing words.

As we returned to the house, we met Lucy and George also coming in from their walk; the traces of tears were on Lucy's face, and George, I saw, looked very grave. I followed him up to his room, and as soon as I had shut the door, I entreated him to tell me what was the matter.

He was silent for a moment, and I again asked him, "George, for pity's sake, answer me; is William Taylor so very ill?"

"Indeed, dear Mary, I fear he is. Lucy spoke to the physician yesterday when he was here, and his opinion was very unfavourable."

"Oh, there is no hope, I know it. I felt it to-day," I exclaimed in an agony. "Did the doctor say there was no hope?" George did not answer.

I looked at him earnestly, and entreated him to *tell* me what he knew.

Finding that concealment would be vain, he told me that the physician had expressed a fear that the disease, which was undoubtedly consumption, might make rapid progress, but that with great quiet, and careful avoidance of cold or damp air, his life might be prolonged for three or four months.

I stood like one petrified; for many moments I could not speak, and George became quite alarmed at the deadly paleness which spread over my face, and the glassy look of my eyes.

"Sit down, dear Mary," he said, "and gather courage to bear this fresh and heavy trial. Remember you have known affliction before now, and have borne it heroically; do not now allow yourself to be overwhelmed by it."

"Oh, George," I answered at last, "I have deserved all this; I have loved the creature more than the Creator. I have sought to satisfy myself with the happiness and the pleasures which this earth affords. I thought that my former trial had weaned me from the world and its affections, but when I found he loved me, that there was no longer a hindrance to our union, my former love seemed to return with tenfold strength, and I have rested my hopes of happiness on this broken reed, which is now piercing my very soul."

I said this in a sort of passion of sorrow, but could find no tears to give vent to my overwrought feelings. In vain George spoke to me affectionately and sympathizingly; in vain my own heart told me that my feelings were of that rebellious nature which would turn against the hand that dealt the blow, instead of bowing submissively to the stroke; a perfect whirlwind of passionate grief tore through my heart, uprooting, as it seemed, every right and holy thought, and leaving a blighted desert in its track.

This could not last long, such intensity of agony must have soon killed me, and George was evidently appalled at the expression of my countenance, as it reflected the workings of my heart.

For nearly a quarter of an hour this fearful struggle lasted, during which time George's words fell all unheeded on my ear. At last the words, "Fear not, I am with thee," as repeated by my mother on the night of my father's death, seemed to sound with her very voice in my ears. I have never known whether George had repeated them, and the sound had caught my ear, and brought back old memories, or whether the words had been suggested to my mind, and, in the excited state of my feelings, had seemed to assume a living tone; *but* most distinctly they seemed to sound in my

ear, and brought back to my recollection the patient submissive grief of my sorrowing mother, when the "light of her eyes had been taken away with a stroke." A deep sense of shame and contrition for the guilty feelings in which I had indulged, succeeded to the first burst of passion, and served to calm me more than any thing else could have done, and I rose to leave the room.

"Make my excuse down stairs," I said to George; "say that I have a very bad headache, and shall keep my room. To-morrow," I said, kissing him, "I hope you will find that I can behave better."

"I will send Emma to you," said poor George, in great distress. "You look so ill, some one must go to you; Emma or Lucy ought to be beside you."

"I would rather not, dear George," I answered. "I must be alone with my Father in heaven; I must seek His forgiveness for my rebellious feelings —His help for the coming trial. Oh, surely for the sake of Him who wept over the tomb of Lazarus, and knew so well what human griefs and human trials are, He will hear my prayer; but do you pray for me too, George; pray that I may glorify Him, even in the furnace; pray that my faith may

not waver again as it did so fearfully but now, but that I may be able to say, with my Saviour in his agony, 'Not my will, but thine be done.'"

With these words I left the room, and went to my own, how, I scarcely know. Once there I threw myself on my knees, and poured out the feelings of my grief in prayer, and, after a considerable time, I felt some relief. The conviction that my Saviour knew and sympathized with my sorrow, that His promise to be near in time of need would not, could not fail, shed a peace and quietness over my mind which, at first, it would have seemed, nothing but long years could have accomplished. My heart had indeed been overwhelmed, but I had been led to the Rock that was higher than I, and there I was enabled to find peace.

Still no tears had come to my relief, and the burning of my eyeballs and dull aching of my head had become almost unbearable.

Dinner had been sent up to my room; I rejected it with loathing; both Emma and Lucy had applied for entrance to me, but I begged them to leave me alone. At last, about eight o'clock, a gentle tap came to my door, which was locked.

To my question, "Who is there?" the voice of Lady Taylor replied in an agitated tone—

"Dear Mary, let me in; I have brought you some tea, and I wish to speak to you."

Lady Taylor calling me dear Mary, and bringing me tea with her own hand! how strange it seemed. I opened the door, she entered, shut it after her, and, setting down the tea, insisted on my taking it, and watched me as I swallowed it convulsively. At last she spoke—

"Your brother has told you all—has told you that I must lose my boy, my William. Oh, how can I ever bear it? how shall I tell Sir William? it will kill him next; it is dreadful, too dreadful." She wept bitterly as she spoke, the haughty woman was gone, and the affectionate mother alone stood before me. "Oh, I have doted on him; he was everything to me, dear Mary; what shall I do when I have lost my son?" As she spoke she laid her head on my shoulder and sobbed.

The sight of her sorrow, the endeavour to speak words of comfort to her, and to lead her to the only source of consolation, acted beneficially on myself, and I was at last enabled to mingle my tears with hers.

After a time we both became more composed. "For his sake," Lady Taylor said, "we must control our feelings and be calm; but how shall I tell Sir William?"

I proposed that Lucy should break the sad news to her father, to which she agreed, as she felt, she said, wholly unable to do so herself.

The next morning I was able to come down shortly after breakfast time, and to meet Mr Taylor with calmness.

He rallied me on the suddenness of my attack on the previous day, and said that ladies' headaches seemed always to come to hand as readily as their nightcaps, though your pale face and hollow eyes are pretty strong proofs that yours was a genuine and unadulterated one. We again went out for a walk, but I noticed, though he made an effort to be gay, that it was an effort, and as I found it difficult to sustain the conversation, we at length ceased to speak, and walked on for a considerable way in perfect silence.

At last he spoke, but in a tone so hollow and altered, that I started.

"Mary, I am dying, and they have told you so." He looked at me with such a searching glance, that had I wished, I could not have deceived him; he seemed to read my very soul.

Finding he still looked at me, and waited for an answer, I said at last, "Dear William, what makes you think so?"

"I have suspected it for some time past; many

of my symptoms, especially the spitting of blood, alarmed me. I followed the doctor out of the room the day before yesterday, but neither Lucy nor he noticed that I was near, or knew that I heard her ask him to speak to her in another room. The result of that conference was but too evident in the faces of my poor mother and Lucy, and yours to-day," he added affectionately, "has proved the saddest tell-tale of all."

I could not answer him. I could only pray fervently that he might be prepared for the solemn event which awaited him, and that we who survived might be supported under the heavy trial.

How strangely in contrast with our feelings was the bounding step, and bright beaming face of little William, who ran out of the house to meet us as we returned.

"Oh, papa, you cheated me," he said, "and went out without me, and I meant to take you to see a swing that Peter has put up for me in the large oak tree behind the house; do come, dear papa, and give me a swing."

"I cannot, my darling, I am not very well," said his father, and stooped to kiss him.

"Then I will come in and read a pretty story to you, papa, while you lie on the sofa."

"Not just now, my boy, papa is tired, and wants to be alone; run to the swing and get Peter to give you a high one."

"And I will read to you by and by, papa;" and off he ran, full of glee, dear happy child, little knowing the sad hearts he was leaving behind him.

It is needless to dwell on Mr Taylor's prolonged sickness. It was accompanied by the usual delusive hopes, raised only to be dashed again to the ground, which invariably attend his complaint. From the time that he knew of his danger, he had set himself to prepare to meet his God. Many doubts and fears had at first clouded his mind, in the immediate contemplation of death; but the recollection of his beloved sister Winnifred, the influence of Julia's unaffected piety, and the example of their peaceful deaths, had already taught him to trust for salvation in Him through whom alone it is to be found.

His greatest trial was the thought of what I should suffer, and the leaving his children, for never was there a more devoted father.

The rector of the little church which has so often been mentioned, was a Mr Granville. He had only come to Hanfield a year or two before;

but in the present trying state of affairs, he proved an inestimable blessing.

Pleasing and gentlemanly in his manners, earnest and devoted to his calling, truly striving to serve his Master in all things, he was enabled to win the affections of all, and to give weight to his exhortation by the consistency of his own character.

As soon as he knew of Mr Taylor's danger, he visited the Hall daily, and poured words of consolation and encouragement into the hearts of the mourners there. He had himself been greatly tried, and could sympathize with the sorrowing. He it was who at last broke the fatal news to the good old baronet, Lucy having found herself quite unequal to the task. So tenderly, so like an affectionate son did he speak, so consolingly did he remind him of the better country after which he should strive, if he would meet his son again, that the old man wept like a child, and in the humbled state of his mind, seemed to say with Job, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

It was the end of October. The trees were almost bare, and the white hoar-frost that covered their branches, and whitened the ground where it was not exposed to the sun, reminded us that

winter was approaching; but we little heeded the voice of nature. For several weeks Mr Taylor had not left the house. The billiard room had been furnished as a bed-room, as it opened into the library; and to these two rooms, which were kept at an equal temperature, he had been confined. He usually after breakfast, had his children brought to him before he left his room, and would teach them a short text, or a verse of some simple hymn.

We generally made a point of being all in the library when he first came into it; and he had always something kind and affectionate to say to each. After a little general conversation, the rest left the room, and I remained alone with him, except that little Willie would often beg to be allowed to sit on a footstool at papa's feet, promising to be very quiet if allowed—a promise he always faithfully performed. I never left the room when Mr Granville called to see Mr Taylor; it was the wish of both that I should remain, as they thought it would soothe and comfort me—and so it did. To this beloved pastor Mr Taylor opened his mind freely; it was delightful as well as most instructive to mark the development of his spiritual character, and his daily increasing preparedness for the great change that awaited him.

One day—it was the 3d of November—he had talked longer and more earnestly than usual. He spoke of the blessed hope of immortality through the gospel; of the sweet assurance he felt that his sins had been washed away by the blood of Jesus; and, referring to the pain which the thought of his approaching death had at first occasioned him, said, that now he could from the heart say, that "to depart and to be with Christ was far better." He had seemed unusually free from pain that day, and spoke with less difficulty; but he was somewhat exhausted after Mr Granville left. He begged me to go out and take a short walk; but I said I should prefer remaining with him, only, as he seemed tired, I would take my work, and let him have some rest by not speaking. After a short time he appeared to sleep, and, as I glanced at him from time to time, he seemed to smile. At last he gave a deep sigh, which attracted my attention, and a beam of the afternoon sun just then lighted up his face, and showed me an altered look that alarmed me.

I rang the bell violently, and ran to his side and took his hand. "Oh, don't," said little Willie, who had just entered on tiptoe; "you will wake papa."

In a few minutes his father and mother, Lucy, and Emma were in the room, alarmed by the bell, and fearing the worst. The moment they looked on him, they saw, as I had done, that the hour of our trial had come. I moved round to the back of the couch on which he lay, and his mother took my place and the hand I had resigned to her. Another deep sigh, and he opened his eyes, and as he did so, said in a low but distinct voice, "There shall be no more sorrow." He looked round uneasily at the faces bending so sadly over him, till he saw me; then a smile passed over his face, and he whispered, "Set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

To each one he addressed an appropriate text, or word of advice. The twins were brought in, he kissed them tenderly, and evidently offered up a silent prayer for them. To his boy he spoke of that Father in heaven, who has promised to protect the fatherless. With sad wonder the poor child listened, and crept closer to the beloved parent, who spoke of leaving him.

"Don't go," he said, "don't go away, dear papa, stay with Willie."

He turned again to me. "You will love and

take care of my darlings?" A slight tremor passed over him, he smiled again, looked upwards—and he was gone.

I pass over the dull and dreary months of heavy sorrow which succeeded, though even these had been cheered by the soothing influences of that blessed religion, which alone speaks comfort to the broken-hearted mourner. Time passed on, and with it brought an alleviation to our sorrow, which had its chastening, and, I believe, sanctifying effect on us all. Poor Lucy was very ill after her brother's death, having felt it most deeply. The nursing her, and the necessity of exerting ourselves with the dear children, had a salutary effect upon the rest of us. All George's entreaties that their marriage might take place soon, as privately as possible, could not persuade Lucy to be married within a year of her brother's death.

Her wish that a double marriage should take place on her wedding day was accomplished after all; though not as she had once hoped. On the same day my Emma was united to Mr Granville, and both the young couples seem to enjoy a larger share of married happiness than falls to the lot of most.

For myself, I have remained at Hanfield, my

mother having a home alternately with George and William. I undertook willingly the charge of his dear children which Mr Taylor had left me on his death-bed.

And now it may be thought by some of my young readers that mine must be a miserable, dreary life. Not so; I can truly say I am happy. No longer buoyant with youth's hopes and spirits, no longer anticipating happiness in earth's perishable enjoyments, I am still happy—happy in a consciousness that my life is not altogether useless; that I am a comfort to the father and mother of him I loved so well, and a guardian to his children; but, above all, happy in the thought that when a few more short years of trial and probation are past, I shall go to that land where sorrow and sighing are no more, and where the weary are at rest.

THE END.

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